

Hebrews

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[0 : 00] Well, thank you all of you for being here. And as I remarked last week, we were talking a little bit about Scripture, about the subject of the inspiration of Scripture.

And in particular, we were talking about the issues of the canon and how it is and why it is that there are not a whole lot more books in the Bible than what there are.

And you need to be advised that what we have in the Bible, comprised of what is traditionally thought of as 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New, constitutes the entirety of the Word of God so that we are not lacking anything.

But in addition to those 66 books that made it into the canon because they were inspired of God, there are literally hundreds and hundreds of other writings, very ancient.

Some of them were as old as those writings that were in the Bible, and they never made it in. And the reason being, simply, they were not canonical.

[1 : 08] They did not pass the test. And the long and the short of it is this, in my estimation at least. If God did not supernaturally superintend the inclusion of the books that we have in the Bible and the exclusion of other books that are not in the Bible, if God did not oversee that process to make sure that we got the full revelation and only the full revelation, then the entire purpose of revelation is defeated.

Now that's a very important argument, and we need to be familiar with it. If not only the message and the words of the Bible are inspired, but their being included in that are not inspired also and superintended by the Almighty, then we do not have and cannot have an authoritative revelation at all.

And I think I might have related to you one time earlier about the common view that people have regarding the Bible. This was a fellow that I worked with back in Washington State right after I was discharged from the Army there at Fort Lewis.

Lived in Olympia with my new wife for several months, and I worked at a radio station there, writing commercials for a radio station. And one day at lunch, I just pulled out my little Gideon's New Testament.

I had a few minutes extra, and I was just reading some verses in the New Testament. And an old-seasoned broadcaster was there who'd been working at that radio station for years.

[2 : 56] I looked at it and said, what are you reading there? And I said, oh, it's the New Testament. I've just taken a few minutes of my lunch break reading it. You don't believe that stuff, do you?

And I said, what, the Bible? And he said, yeah. And I said, well, yeah, yeah, I believe it. I certainly do believe it. And I had been a Christian about maybe three months.

Got saved on my wedding day, and some of you know that story. And I said, don't you believe the Bible? And he said, well, yeah, I believe parts of it.

And I said, parts? Yeah, parts. I said, what parts? He said, the parts that I can agree with. Now, that is very typical.

That is very typical of the way people reason because they use what they are convinced is a superior, infallible mind, thinking process, logic.

[4 : 05] And they apply that to the Scripture. And when they read the Scriptures, if it makes sense to them and they agree with it, oh, that's good stuff. I believe that.

But when they read something that they don't agree with, they say, well, that's not true. And all they are doing is superimposing their authority on the authority of Scripture, which in essence is a supreme kind of arrogance.

Only they don't even realize it. They don't even realize it. And we have made the point in the past, and this is a really important thing to understand, guys, that in our fallenness, we fell completely.

Everything about us fell. Not just our physical bodies, but our mental ability and thinking processes so that we automatically reason and think with a damaged, fallen intellect.

And that causes us to reach wrong conclusions. And that causes us to engage in wrong thinking.

And that causes us to engage in wrong actions.

[5 : 12] And what you get is the world we've got today. So the Bible, among other things, providing comfort and assurance, etc., provides the enlightenment and the truth that is necessary that will allow us to overcome our warped, skewed thinking and reasoning and adjust our thinking to the dictates of Scripture.

And this is what Bible study and growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ is all about. It is that we might be conformed to the image of Christ, and we do that by examining the dictates and the teachings of the Word of God and incorporating those principles into our lives so that we can live them out.

That's what this class is all about. That's what Church on Sunday is supposed to be all about. It is a learning process that enables us to grow and become conformed to the image of Christ.

And as we adopt the principles set forth in the Bible, then you get a life that is productive. See, after all, Christ said, I am come that man might have life and have it more abundantly.

And that's the only way that it's obtainable. So the issue of what constitutes the Word of God is very important. As I told you last week, I would bring you some examples of extra-canonical writings.

[6 : 40] And the fellow who put this book together obviously is a believer. And he obviously does not believe that this writings that he's sharing with us belong in the Bible.

But he's just giving us examples. This is the apocryphal and legendary Life of Christ by James De Quincey Donahue. And it was written in 1903, published by the Macmillan Company.

And I'm going to read a little bit of it, and I'll send it around to you. And I just want you to see how this writing and reading compares with what you know about the Scriptures and how the Bible reads.

Okay? Now, this is from the Gospel of Thomas, I believe. Okay. Yeah, this is from the Gospel of Thomas.

And it reads, All the Gospel of Thomas give us this age, But verse 2 says, He was the boy Jesus went out of the house where his mother was and walked up and down in it.

[7 : 59] And he played with some children at the bed of the Jordan on the ground where the water was flowing. Now Jesus collected the water into seven pools, and to each of the pools he made passages through which, at his command, he brought the water in and took it back again.

Then he said, It is my will that you become clear and excellent waters. And they became so. Then one of those children with whom he was playing, a son of the devil, moved with envy, shut the passages which supplied the pools with water, and overthrew what Jesus had built up.

Then said Jesus unto him, Woe unto thee, thou son of death, thou son of Satan, dost thou destroy the works which I have wrought? And immediately he who had done this died.

Then with great uproar the parents of the dead boy cried out against Mary and Joseph, saying to them, Your son has cursed our son and he is dead. And when Joseph and Mary heard this, they came forthwith to Jesus, on account of the outcry of the parents of the boy, and the gathering together of the Jews.

But Joseph privately said to Mary, I dare not speak to him, but do thou admonish him and say, Why hast thou raised against us the hatred of this people?

[9 : 22] And why must this troublesome hatred of men be borne by us? And his mother, having come to him, asked him, saying, My Lord, what was it that he did to bring about his death?

And he said, He made, he deserved death, because he scattered the works that I had made. Then his mother asked him, saying, Do not so, my Lord, because all men rise up against us.

But he, not wishing to grieve his mother, with his right foot, kicked the hinder parts of the dead boy, and said to him, Rise, thou son of iniquity, for thou art not worthy to enter into the rest of my father, because thou didst destroy the works which I had made.

Then he who had been dead rose up and went away, and Jesus, by the word of his power, brought water into the pools by the aqueduct.

Does that sound like scripture to you? Well, I'll just send this around. You can glance through it if you want. And it doesn't quite pass the smell test either, does it?

[10:37] But you can see there are other examples in there. And what's in this book is just a small smattering of what is available out there in what is called extra-canonical writings.

They do not belong in the Bible, and we're glad that they didn't make it in there. Some of this stuff is just so ridiculous and fanciful. And it tells another one about Jesus making little clay birds out of clay, and then he threw them up in the air, and they became real and flew off.

And it's just a bunch of nonsensical stuff like that. And you know, a lot of this stuff is written, a lot of this stuff is written in an attempt to reinforce or to make the cause even more greater, even greater. And I call these people who do this, those who think God needs their help. And they are going, some people, and you get, hey, you get a lot of this stuff on the Internet, on social media, where people make up things and publish things and put it on the Internet, and their intent is to enhance the cause of Christ or to make a stronger case.

And in reality, it often is a detraction. And it is sometimes an embarrassment to the Christian community. Even though our intentions may have been good, it doesn't always turn out that way.

[12:06] And people who think they are called to help God out are often, somebody put it this way, I can deal with my enemies, but I really need God's help in dealing with my friends.

And sometimes that's the way it is in the cause of Christ. You know, your friends sometimes turn out to be adversarial, even though they may not tend to be.

Sometimes their heart's in the right place, but their actions can be destructive. So, anyway, we are in Hebrews chapter 11, and we are dealing with the... Dan, excuse me. According to that, that guy was a rector in a church.

It's what, Dan? He was a rector in a church. Oh, the guy who wrote the book. Wrote the book.

Yeah, well, he wrote the book. He wrote the book from a scholarly standpoint.

He didn't write the book in that he's promoting it, or that he's advocating that these books belong in the Bible. He has simply done the research and compiled the books to show you the vast difference that exists between extra-canonical writings like these and those that are in the Bible.

[13:20] He's not supporting this stuff. He's just giving an example and saying that this is the kind of stuff that's out there. And he doesn't embrace it, support it at all. So, I don't want you to think that he's suggesting the stuff in this book belongs in the Bible.

Not at all. He's giving you an example and showing you why it doesn't. Pat? What do we do with Jonah and the whale? What about Jonah and the whale? Like that story, we say, how come that depends?

What about Jonah and the whale? You tell non-Christians that, and they say, come on, man. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, actually, Jonah and the whale is no different from other miracles that are in the Bible.

And we're not even talking about... Actually, we don't know that it was a whale. It just says it was a great fish. But anyway, anyway, there is no question, there is no question at all that there is a plethora of supernatural content in the Bible.

And all that tells us is that there is a supernatural power behind it. And that's the real essence of the whole issue.

[14:41] It has to do with our full familiarization with life as it is in our world, in our time.

We know from a standpoint of ongoing experience, we know pretty much how the world operates. There are laws, in effect, that govern certain things. One of which, of course, is gravity. And other things that are inviolable that we have come to accept as normal, and we might even call them natural.

They are those things that are consistent with the world as we know it. And we sometimes tend to insist that we live in what is referred to as a closed system.

That there is no exterior intervention available or possible in this closed system that we call our world or our universe.

[15:54] And anything that portends to be apart from that, we tend to reject. And what we're talking about is the supernatural and the miraculous.

Because we know that axe heads falling into the water don't float. They just don't. They sink.

And when an axe head that has fallen into the water like Elijah's situation in the Old Testament floats, that's not natural. That's supernatural.

And we tend to think there is no room for the supernatural where only the natural dwells. And when Christ came, well, you don't have to look to Christ.

Actually, you can look at the Old Testament and the miracles that are found there. But Christ is probably the greatest concentration of those miracles during a scant period of three years.

[16:54] And what He did was He simply transcended the laws of nature and applied a supernatural element to them.

Now, the question is whether that is plausible. And from a natural human standpoint the answer is no.

It is not plausible. That's why it is called the supernatural. Because it's not natural. It goes beyond that. And our difficulty arises from the fact that our experience is virtually limited to the natural.

That we accept as the norm. The supernatural we automatically look at with a skeptical eye.

And we should because it does not comport with what we know to be the norm. And on that basis alone many reject even the possibility of the supernatural.

[18:05] Thomas Jefferson brilliant as he was created his own New Testament. And he admired to me this is part of as great as Thomas Jefferson was in many ways.

He also had a warped intellect. And he valued the person of Christ and the teachings of Christ and the philosophy of Christ.

Christ. But he utterly denied the supernatural involving Christ. He denied the miracles and created the Bible. I've got a copy of it at home.

I'll bring it if you want to see it. It's called the Jefferson Bible. And he literally went through the New Testament and the life of Christ and he excised the miracles of Christ.

Because Thomas Jefferson was a child of the Enlightenment. The European Enlightenment. And they ruled out the possibility of the supernatural.

[19:15] This goes all the way back to Hume and some of these people back in the late 1700s, early 1800s. When this was even the pre-evolutionary time, this age of Enlightenment is described as humanity coming into its own and it's called the Age of Enlightenment because in a real sense much of it was a backlash against a lot of the religious authority and power that existed at the time, primarily in the Roman Catholic Church, because it exercised not only religious authority and power, but a great deal of political authority and power.

in many respects, it really contributed. Let me put it this way. The corruption and the demands and much of the philosophy and teaching of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1700s and the clergy, you just can't imagine how powerful the clergy was.

And this is even 150 years after the Protestant Reformation started, but there was a huge backlash against the Roman Catholic Church, particularly in France.

And this is one of the things that contributed to the French Revolution. It was not only against the government, but it was against the demands and the standards of the church at the time also.

and the age of enlightenment convinced them that much of what the church had been teaching, much of what Christianity had been teaching, much of what the Bible has to say, has all been superseded by this new reasoning.

[21:09] The age of enlightenment was also called the age of reason, but it was a purely human reason that rejected divine authority, the supernatural, everything connected with that.

And that produced a whole bumper crop of atheistic thinking and so on, like some of the famous people of the past. And one of them was Thomas Paine.

Thomas Paine was a great patriot, a great American patriot. But he was an atheist, and he too, along with Jefferson, was a child of the enlightenment, and he wrote pamphlets and leaflets against the authority of England and the crown, and he greatly contributed in a positive way to the American Revolution.

And he put out numerous pamphlets and articles that were based on a lot of good thinking and logic, and his desire, of course, was to see the colonies separated from England, and he had a powerful impact on the revolution and the actual breaking away from England.

And the man was a brilliant thinker, but he was atheistic to the core, and he too was a child of the reasoning, and that means you reject all of the supernatural because it does not comport with our experience.

[22:42] It does not belong. And on that basis alone, many people reject the authority of the Bible. So, yeah, Pat. Why isn't that story as supernatural as Jonah and the whale?

That's my question. Why isn't the story that you said about Thomas as supernatural as Jonah and the whale is supernatural?

supernatural? Well, I guess it all depends on the establishment of the authorship.

There are a host of other writings and miracles in there that are recorded, and all I can say is that there is a divinely established record of the supernatural that is in the Bible, and I can write, and you can write, any kind of story you want that describes something that is supernatural that has no basis in reality at all.

And why shouldn't that be in the record? In other words, it all depends on the source of the record. Is the account something that actually happened?

[24 : 13] Is it objectively true? Now, you take, for instance, the resurrection of Christ. The only thing that matters is whether or not it really happened.

And believing that it happened doesn't mean it did. And believing that it didn't happen doesn't mean that it didn't. All that matters is, is it factually true?

Is it objectively true? Did it really happen in time and space history? Writing about it doesn't make it so. And when you come to an account like Jonah and the great fish, and the record that is given there, as well as all the other miracles.

And by the way, this is a favorite that is often picked out by Bible objectors, because it does have a ring of fancifulness to it.

There's no question about it. I mean, come on. A man being swallowed by a great fish, and yet staying alive. But it's the one Jesus referred to when he's witnessed to the Pharisees.

[25 : 23] Absolutely. That's the one he used as an example. Yeah. And you've got to tie that with it, Joe, because if Jonah and this great fish is in reality fiction, Jesus spoke of it as factual.

Now, that's the problem. That's a big problem. Because if it really is fictional, then he obviously didn't know that.

You've got an ignorant Jesus right there. And if he did know that it was not factual, but treated it as though it were and used it, then he's culpable of lying.

And he looks pretty bad either way. And he used it because of what was going to happen to him. Exactly. Three days in there. Exactly. Three days in Hades he would be. Set sleep and then rise. Right. And it's all tied to one little word. One little two-letter word. As. As. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

[26 : 35] Even so, the son of man will be three days and three nights. And you've got to reject the whole thing. Or you've got to take the whole thing.

This is an excluded middle. There is nothing in between. Yeah, Pat. I don't want you to misunderstand where I'm going. I'm not questioning that Jonah and the whale.

No, I understand that. Yeah, I understand that. But where my questions arise is God says that his ways are not our ways. Yeah. God says that God says this and this church says that.

Yeah. Yeah. So somewhere along the line the counselor of Trent comes along, whoever that is.

Yeah. Men like me and you. Yeah. And they say this goes out, this comes in. That bothers me.

Yeah. God's working in there. God's sovereign. He's working in that process. He's working with those men. Yeah, and well, with the Council of Trent and the other councils that have been held, what it always boils down to, and I don't care where you go or what church or what anything, it always comes down to this.

[27 : 51] The issue is authority. Always has been, always will be. What is the authority for what we believe? And we say, well, it's the Bible.

Okay, now the point has been made. Well, so we've got this Bible, but we've got all this myriad of interpretations of the Bible.

And the point has been made, and it's a very valid point, that you can make the Bible say anything you want it to say. It's all in how you interpret it.

And different churches and different religious organizations have different interpretations of the Bible. So which one is right? The only thing they have in common, and I'll just take, for instance, one that we're all familiar with, and that is the issue of water baptism.

The point has been made. It doesn't make any difference what position you take on water baptism.

You are in a minority. If you sprinkle for baptism, that is not acceptable to the immersionists.

[29 : 09] They say, you haven't really been baptized. Well, when you come to the immersionists, and these are those who put the whole body under the water because they believe it to be a picture of death and then coming out a picture of resurrection.

And I'm not denying that you cannot read that picture into it. But they say, this is the way that you are to baptize. Well, then do you baptize all the way under one time backwards? Or do you baptize one time forwards? Because some baptize forwards, and they do not accept those who baptize backwards. And then there are those of the brethren persuasion that come along, and they say, you have not been baptized unless you have been immersed three times. Once in the name of the Father, once in the name of the Son, once in the name of the Holy Spirit. Which one is correct? And they all, the one thing, the one thing that all of the denominations have in common is this.

Theirs is the right one, and all the other guys are wrong. That's the only thing that they have in common. And that's been that way for years. And this is what creates denominations, and sex, and that's S-E-C-T-S, sex.

[30 : 29] It creates sex, and it creates divisions, and it creates splits, and splinters, and you get what we've got. So we've got, and I just want to close with this, guys.

I want you to remember this. 500 years ago, and 500 years is not all that long in human history. 500 years ago, there were no Presbyterians.

There were no Church of God. There were no Nazarenes. There were no Episcopalians. There were no Church of England. There were no any of these things.

They didn't exist. They just didn't exist. And they didn't start until after Luther, and Tyndale, and Wycliffe, and those guys started breaking away, and copying the Bible, and putting it into language people could understand.

And then eventually, these different denominations emerged, and they all came into being because of the way they interpreted Scripture.

[31 : 32] And I'm just going to close with this example because it is probably the most obvious and prominent. The whole Pentecostal Church, which is a very, very large organization, here and in South America, they have adherence in the millions, and for the most part, these are born-again people who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and they're going to be in heaven, and when they get there, they're going to get straightened out, and we're going to get straightened out too, because everybody needs straightened out.

And virtually their whole denomination is predicated upon their interpretation of Acts chapter 2, the day of Pentecost, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the speaking in languages unlearned, etc. They have adopted that as their most authoritative passage and justification for their existence. This is why they are called, they name themselves, Pentecostal, because they are related inseparably to the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2.

And they believe that what took place in Acts chapter 2 should be the norm across the board.

And that all believers filled with the Spirit of God should be able to speak in languages unlearned, etc. And that's their authority.

[33 : 01] And they hold that very sincerely, very honestly. And I do not question their integrity or their intent or anything. But it just comes down to this issue of interpretation.

And this, guys, this is why in the Christianity Clarified series I have spent so much time on the subject of hermeneutics. It is the art and science of interpreting the Bible and employing the rules and laws of biblical interpretation and why we do and what they are and how they work.

Because that enables us to develop a consistent pattern of interpretation and see how and why the Scriptures really are the way they are and how to understand it.

So, Frank? Let's really do this. Okay. I can understand how it looks like that coming to me. Okay?

Because you've got when Jesus was a young boy don't say how old he was but you get the interpretation he's first of all he is going into the temple teaching and explaining He was 12 then.

[34 : 11] Okay. All this stuff. Okay. then you hear nothing about him until he's 32 years old. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. I cannot believe that he spent all those years in his daddy's workshop making tables and not saying anything else or performing anything else.

I think I think it's stuff that he did that was not recorded. Oh, I'm sure. I think somebody sitting around and thinking well, you know, if he could do this why couldn't he have made a little pause and kill somebody in front of him I can understand.

Absolutely. You can see how that would arrive at that. Sure. Sure. Because people start, you know, what we don't like in history, guys, what we don't like are blanks.

But wouldn't it be fascinating what he did? Yeah, or it would be. We want to fill in the blanks. And Jesus is probably the most primary example because from the time from the time they brought him out of Egypt when he was two, three years old back to Nazareth where he's going to grow up, we don't hear a single word in the Bible about Jesus from the time he was about three until the time he was twelve.

And then at twelve that's when he went into the temple and was teaching. So what about those nine years in between? Frank, you say, what about those nine? Was he doing nothing? We don't know. [35 : 40] How did he relate to his brothers and sisters during that time? What kind of a playmate was he? We don't know. We aren't given that. So some people can't stand the blanks and they want to fill in the blanks.

So they make up this stuff and there may I would go so far as to say in some of these stories there may very well be some truth.

But boy, separating it from the fiction would be really difficult. So John closes out his gospel. John closes out his gospel by saying and many other signs many other signs did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book.

But these, John says, these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that through believing you might have life in his name.

And John closes his gospel with that. Yeah, it does. And you know, we have what I think it's I'm not sure about this but I think it's maybe 13 parables that Jesus gave that are found in the Bible.

[36 : 59] I'm not sure about that number. But what I'm saying is and there were many more that he gave that are not recorded. And there are other things that he did that are not recorded because he certainly was a man of action and he had a public ministry for three and a half years and we do not have at all all that went on.

And we don't have all that went on in Peter's Pentecostal address for instance. You can read what Peter said when he stood up and spoke this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel and you can read Peter's Pentecostal address in a matter of seconds or a minute or so.

You think that's all the longer he spoke? No. I think he probably spoke for several minutes. But we don't have all that he said recorded there. So that's the truth all through the Scriptures.

There is a lot more that went on than what is recorded. But what is recorded is what God wanted us to have. And that's the important thing to keep in mind. So remember the Bible was never given to satisfy our curiosity.

It was given to tell us what we need to know. Enjoy your breakfast in the day ahead guys.

Appreciate you being here. And next week maybe we'll get back to Hebrews 11.

[38 : 20] Okay?