

March 2, 2019 FBC Defenders Conference Who Says So? Message One

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, **2** Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; **3** Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Our two messages in this conference are designed to address the issue of Biblical Authority. When I was growing up, one of the most popular questions we asked was "who says so?" If we were told to stay on the sidewalk because it was too wet to play on the playground and we passed the message around to other students, it was inevitable that someone would ask, "who says so?" When we could say that this came from a teacher or an administrator, the proper authority was established and the rule was thus given validity. This question came up almost any time we conveyed information.

For the Christian, the issue of "who says so" **is the subject under discussion when we talk about biblical authority.**

Specifically, by Biblical Authority, I mean to say that we believe the Bible is God's inspired message to us, and since God is our ultimate authority as Christians, **His word, the Bible, is our final authority in all matters of life.**

Our time together in this conference will be built around this passage in Hebrews. The writer of the Book isn't identified for us, it is often called, "**The Orphaned Epistle.**" The signature on the book is "God;" that's really all that needs to be said. It declares for us both the **substance and source of God's revelation to us.** In times past God spoke through the prophets in many ways. But now, God has spoken to us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

One of the great themes of the book is that the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant, and right up front the writer reminds **us THAT WE HAVE A BETTER SPOKESMAN, because God has spoken to us through His Son. We could say that God's "last word" to us is JESUS.**

As the writer speaks of God's spokesmen in the past, and His present speaking through His Son, he reminds us that the Bible is divided **into two covenants – the Old Testament and the New Testament.** It is all inspired, it is all God's Word to us, but it applies to us in different ways. Notice:

Luke 16:16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

Matthew 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Jesus Himself was speaking to us about the **Old Testament Law**. "The Law" was what they called the "Torah," **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy**. It came to refer, in common usage, to all of what we call the Old Testament. Obviously, Jesus spoke of how the reign of the Law was coming to an end – a time when it would be fulfilled.

Much of the New Testament is given to discuss **how the rule of the law had been replaced by the walk of faith in Christ Jesus**. Far too many passages relate to this for us to consider this afternoon, but here is the classic example:

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. **24** Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. **25** But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

When Paul the Apostle writes in this passage that the Law was our schoolmaster, but after faith has come, we are no longer under that schoolmaster, he declares without question that **WE ARE NO LONGER UNDER THE RULE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW**. In a practical way, then, this means that we do not turn back to the regulations of the Law of Moses to determine how we worship, live our life, how we dress, what we eat, or how we conduct ourselves in the world. Instead we have passages like this:

1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

I am not saying that we don't need the Old Testament anymore and can dismiss it from our thinking, or as some have, "The Old Testament isn't your Bible." Instead:

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: **17** That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Right up front, we see that the Old Testament is profitable for doctrine – that refers to what we believe, and many of our beliefs are rooted in the Old Testament revelation to us. Some of the things God "rebuked" in the Old Testament are still things He works against today. Many of the prophecies of the Old Testament await fulfillment. Aspects of God's covenant with His people Israel are waiting to be fulfilled.

In a general way, it is impossible to understand God's great work of redemption without understanding the truth God reveals to us in the Old Testament. But in a practical way, again, we **don't turn to the book of Leviticus** in order to answer the big issues of life.

We might as well go straight to one of the hottest topics in today's culture as an example of how this works:

Leviticus 20:13 If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

That was God's law for His people, the Jews, and it was God's law for the land – the country or nation of Israel as well. **The Law of God was the LAW OF THE LAND.** That tells us a lot about what God thinks about the sin of homosexuality, but it isn't where we go to try and explain what God has told us about this subject in our world today. That was the law of the land in Israel, and the sin of homosexuality, like many others, carried the death penalty.

But if you want to talk about what applies to us today, we go to places like this:

Romans 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: **27** And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

And this....

1 Corinthians 6:9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, **10** nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. **11 And such were some of you.** But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

If we want to ask about gay marriage, again, we don't go back to Leviticus to find our answer. We read what Jesus said:

Matthew 19:4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, **5** And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? **6** Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

The implications of Jesus' answer to the question about divorce are far reaching – but clearly establish for us God's creative design for marriage, and the fact that divorce is a sin, as well as many other things. As long as this passage says, "What God hath joined together...", I cannot in any way affirm a marriage between two men or two women. I also can't, as long as this passage is in the Bible, say that divorce isn't a sin because it is.

So, without going any further in that direction, **I hope we have established in your minds that God has spoken, that in times past He spoke by the prophets, and that God is speaking today to us through His Son, Jesus Christ.**

The New Testament records for us the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit inspired commentary on those teachings so that we can understand how to live out our relationship with Christ. The Old Testament, to be clear, is also God's Word, is also inspired, and applies to **us in principle and in example and in the establishment of Biblical truth.** But we don't go back to the Law of Moses to settle all of our life issues because we aren't under the law.

We can also see how that the Bible is at the center of a firestorm of a cultural controversy, primarily caused by Christians who have tried to make our country – America – a nation where the Biblical principles are also the law of the land. Their efforts were no doubt well-intentioned for the most part.

We've often heard proclamations that America was once a "Christian nation." **We don't have time to argue the relative merits of having a Christian nation;** or the inherent fallacies that were in place when America was declared to be a Christian nation. To whatever degree that was once true – it is no longer.

Instead, we want to make sure that we help send you guys out prepared to do what the Biblical writer, Jude, called, **"Contend for the Faith:"**

Jude 1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: **2** Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. **3** Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.**

When we see the words, **"contend for the Faith,"** let me give you a couple of things that I don't think we should read into it. I don't think he means primarily that we should be contending with the Methodists or the Churches of Christ or whoever – although we seriously disagree with them and many others and we must stand for the truth of the gospel.

I don't think primarily that we should see this as meaning that we should contend with lost people over their lifestyle choices. We need to be giving them the gospel, because **lost people don't understand the scriptures** and HAVE NO HOLY SPIRIT IN THEM TO HELP THEM LIVE THEM OUT. They resist such activities and HIGHLY RESENT IT.

What lost people need to hear IS THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL and HOW THEY ARE TO RESPOND TO IT.

One of the worst things we have ever tried to do as Christians is to force lost people to live by biblical principles.

When I see Jude calling people to EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH, the primary place where this battle must be waged **IS IN OUR OWN HEARTS AND MINDS AS GOD'S PEOPLE**. The influence of what Jude calls the false prophets IS EVERYWHERE.

The intent of a million voices today is to turn our hearts away from the truth – from the faith that we have in Jesus Christ. But a million voices, whether in song or in pictures or in sports or whatever – are offset **BY THE VOICE OF THE ONE TRUE GOD as HE SPEAKS TO US THROUGH HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST**.

Now we will look more specifically at Hebrews 1 in our next session as the basis for us **to see WHAT God is saying to us**...but for now I want us to pick up a passage from Isaiah the prophet – one of those great Old Testament passages that speaks to us so powerfully by **EXAMPLE and therefore for our ADMONITION**.

Isaiah 66:1 Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? **2** For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word. **3** "He who kills a bull is as if he slays a man; He who sacrifices a lamb, as if he breaks a dog's neck; He who offers a grain offering, as if he offers swine's blood; He who burns incense, as if he blesses an idol. Just as they have chosen their own ways, And their soul delights in their abominations, **4** So will I choose their delusions, And bring their fears on them; Because, when I called, no one answered, When I spoke they did not hear; But they did evil before My eyes, And chose that in which I do not delight."

This is the concluding passage of the book of Isaiah, and God chooses to use it to warn His people as He saw their entire approach to Him was broken – their worship, their service, their desire to be blessed by Him – all of it was messed up.

First, God warns them of their concept of Him. Their approach to God was all tied to their service of Him in the Temple in Jerusalem. They were completely preoccupied with the place where they could approach God.

But God reminded them that He is the OMNIPOTENT CREATOR who is ENTHRONED IN HEAVEN and has His FEET ON THE EARTH, and that means WE CAN'T BUILD A HOUSE BIG ENOUGH TO KEEP GOD IN. We can't get preoccupied with where we GO to worship because **WE CAN'T GO FAR ENOUGH**, or what we DO to worship because **WE CAN'T DO ENOUGH**.

When we confine God to a specific time and place of our choosing and of our creation, it is almost inevitable that the focus will quickly shift away from WHAT GOD WANTS to what WE WANT.

Second, He saw the DEFICIENCY OF THEIR REPENTANCE. God was looking for people who were of a poor and contrite spirit – which refers to someone who recognizes how much they need God and how much they need to repent and receive His forgiveness.

The opposite of that is quickly spelled out in the passage. They were, according to God, contaminating their offerings with pigs blood – an abomination to be sure. They were killing animals as if they were killing a man, they had their feet on a dogs neck and blessing an idol.

This is all about WHAT WAS IN THEIR HEARTS. They were approaching God with bitterness and anger in their hearts toward others – they were practicing evil things and playing around with false gods. They would say, "God, we would never bring those things into Your house..." **But God says they have, because they brought them in their hearts.**

They were too fond of their sins to give them up, and even when they stood in God's house they were planning their next trip in the darkness.

That brings us to the final passage we will look at in this first message:

Isaiah 66:3bJust as they have chosen their own ways, And their soul delights in their abominations, **4** So will I choose their delusions, And bring their fears on them; **Because, when I called, no one answered, When I spoke they did not hear;** But they did evil before My eyes, And chose that in which I do not delight."

They had diminished God in their eyes and magnified their sins because their soul **delighted in their sins more than in God.** God confronts their delusion, then, that they could go to the temple – or in our case, the church – **and sing a few songs and mouth a few phrases and listen to a sermon and call it all good.** Their delusion was that their worship of God really mattered at all when we spend it mad at other believers or are hung over from our last trip into sin and planning our next one.

How did this all manifest itself? Well, God was calling but no one was picking up. God was speaking but no one was listening.

If it was a letter, we wrote "return to sender" on it. If it was a text, we deleted it. If He posted a message on our Facebook page, we deleted it and unfriended and blocked Him.

But we gobble up every tweet from everybody else – we answer anybody's call but His. We hear from everybody and anybody – but not the God of the universe Who made us and the VERY AIR WE BREATHE and the GROUND WE WALK ON.

Once we shrink God down to a place we can handle it's a short trip to doing greedily what **HE calls evil and not caring that we aren't pleasing Him at all.**

So, our message at this point was to establish that God is speaking to us through His Word, the Bible. There is an Old Testament and a New Testament, so that today JESUS CAN BE SAID TO HAVE CORNERED THE MARKET ON THE REVELATION OF GOD. You can't know God except through Jesus Christ. There is no other approach to Him, and no other way to be saved.

One of the greatest difficulties in American Christianity is the fact that our God has grown too small. We don't deal well with the God Who sits enthroned on the heavens and has the earth as His footstool. We aren't relating well to the God Who says, "What are you going to create that can contain Me?"

And as God calls out to us – we choose not to listen. We choose our sins over Him, because relating to Him as He is demands more than we are willing to give – or give up.