

How Do You View the Bible?

A few years ago my mother told me about a preacher who delivered a good biblical lesson which concluded with relevant application. The application was open-ended so that each individual was responsible for their own application. The lesson was the same for everyone, but the stay-at-home mom would have a different application than the doctor or the widow, different than the salesman or the school teacher.

A friend of my mom snorted afterward, "Why can't he just tell us what to do? It would be a lot easier if we just knew the rules. I could do that."

Some people might roll their eyes with a sigh, "Some people...." Yet others might agree.

There is something comfortable in a packaged set of rules. It is neat and tidy. It should be brief and simple. It is not 'flawed' like the command lacking precise definition: "Love your *neighbor* as yourself."

OOPS! Back up. Those were the words of Jesus drawing from the Law of Moses!

Here's the point: While a packaged law code may sound simple, brief, and tidy, it strikes against the two most important commands uttered by God in which the application is rather *open-ended*. Jesus commented on the two Great Commands saying:

On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.

—Matthew 22:40 (NASB)

In the Hebrew Scriptures of the Jews 'The Law' was not simply the Law of Moses but the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. 'The Prophets' included the 'historical' books Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and the prophetic books except for Daniel. So, in essence God's revelation up to that point in time rested

on the two Great Commands. All scripture revolved around and was connected to: *Love for God* and *love for one's neighbor*.

We can thank a Jewish lawyer for pointing out the gray area, "Who is my *neighbor*?" Yet, Jesus gave an answer (The Parable of the Good Samaritan) that showed that the lawyer had asked the wrong question. (Luke 10)

The statement of my mom's friend suggested the same kind of thinking as the lawyer. On the surface it sounds good, "Just define the rules and we can follow." Yet, Luke revealed that the motives of the lawyer were not pure.

Are people losing interest in the Bible? In the late 1800's there was a shift in biblical scholarship. Instead of the *inspired Word of God* many saw the Bible as mere ancient literature. The literary approach to scripture has now given way to a modern view in which truth is largely dependent on history and culture. Based on the trend of biblical interpretation in America many 'Christian' groups have effectively stamped the word 'Obsolete' on the cover of the Bible.

Yet the Bible still claims to be the revelation of God. It claims to be inspired of God. It claims to be relevant in giving life answers regardless of location, time, background, culture, or politics. So, one must embrace or reject the Bible in its entirety; there is no middle ground.

Bible study can be time consuming. Not every question in life is answered in a single verse. So, if we are going to be true disciples of Jesus, we must devote ourselves to His Word.

In future articles I wish to encourage us 'to' study the Bible and also 'how to' study the Bible. I hope you will look forward to the articles!

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