

# CLARITY

God's word is understandable

- “If it is true that the Bible tells us about God, not least what kind of God he is, it is no less true that unless God really is that sort of God, it is impossible to appreciate the Bible for what it is. To approach the bible correctly it is important to know something of the God who stands behind it.”

- Carson, D.A., *Collected Writings on Scripture*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 3-4)

# Review

- **Revelation**

- the process by which God causes the truth to be disclosed.

- **Inspiration**

- The process by which God causes the truth to be recorded.

- **Illumination**

- The process by which God causes the truth to be understood.

# Review

- Revelation

- God speaking directly to people
- God speaking through people
- God doing things through people.
- God causing others to speak or write for or about Him .
  - *Inspiration*

# Review

- **Inspiration**
  - 2 Peter 1:20-1
- **“No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”**

# Review

- Illumination
- Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.
  - Psalm 119:105.
- In your light, we see light.
  - Psalm 36:9.
- “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” – C.S. Lewis

# Sufficiency

- *Everyone* thinks their way of viewing the world is *sufficient*.
  - But not everyone knows that they think that way.
- Challenge the assumption.

# Sufficiency

- Frame – “Scripture contains all the divine words needed for any aspect of human life.”
  - 2 Timothy 3:16-7
    - *All* Scripture
    - What to believe – teaching doctrine.
    - To show that someone is understanding or doing something incorrectly – rebuke.
    - To show people how to change – correction.
    - To disciple people on an ongoing basis – Matthew 28:19-20
    - Complete, adequate, equipped for every good work

# Sufficiency

- 2 Peter 1:3-4
  - “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”

# Sufficiency

- By God's power He saves
  - The Cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
  - God's ability to make the knowledge sufficient for the task by illuminating the word so that it can be seen clearly.
- Through the knowledge of Him.
  - Though illumination is necessary by God's power, *the information is still there to be known, and it can be comprehended without giving salvation.*
    - *The word is sufficient to the task of conferring this knowledge.*

# Sufficiency

- The Westminster Catechism, Question 4 –
  - “The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.”
  
- “Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other.” – John Calvin

# Clarity

- All theology is talk about God.
  - Theology can never start with us. This wouldn't make any sense.
- The clarity of Scripture is a theological presupposition based on what Scripture has to say about God.
- “Jesus appears to operate on the assumption that when the words of Scripture are read or heard, they will be understood, at least well enough...to warrant an acknowledgement that he is who he says he is and that his words are true.”
  - Thompson, 87.

# Clarity

- How can we assume this quality of Scripture based on what Scripture tells us?
- **“For I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this also I believe-that unless I believe I shall not understand.” – Anselm of Canterbury**

# Clarity

- Again, *everyone* has a faith structure.
- One *must* presuppose something to learn something else. All knowledge is connected, nothing can be learned or understood completely separated from everything else.

# Clarity

- So Scripture says that God -
  - Is in control of his creation.
  - Has authority which is the final authority.
    - And so...
  - Can choose to be as clear as he knows He must be to communicate what He decides to communicate.

# Clarity

- God is in Control of how He reveals Himself and his purposes
- Isaiah 55:10-11
- "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, *making* it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me *empty*, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

# Clarity

- So, in considering the clarity of Scripture, why are some not saved?
- Isaiah 6:9-11
- And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste,"

# Clarity

- Matthew 13:10-15
- 10Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” 11And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been *given*. 12For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 13This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they *do not see*, and hearing they *do not hear*, nor do they understand.

# Clarity & Sufficiency

- How should we understand this?
- Aren't Jesus' words clear?
- Was God's word sufficient and clear to Abraham in a different way than it is for us?
  - Sufficient for *what*?
  - Clear enough for *what*?

# Definitions of Clarity

- “bible is written [so] that its teachings are able to be understood by all who [genuinely seek God]. – Grudem, 108.
- “meaning is accessible to all who [genuinely seek God]. – Thompson, 169-70.
- “all things necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation...” Turretin, 2.17.1, Ward 125.

# The Word of God is Sufficiently Clear

- For the believer and for the one who will believe, the word of God is both understandable and appropriate for understanding who God is, who we are, what He has done about, and what He wants us to do.
- The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
  - Psalm 19:7b
- The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.
  - Psalm 119:130 NASB

# The Word of God is Sufficiently Clear

- “Jesus appears to operate on the assumption that when the words of Scripture are read or heard, they will be understood, at least well enough...to warrant an acknowledgement that he is who he says he is and that his words are true.” *Yet*, this overarching confidence does not exclude the possibility that an individual passage might prove difficult, such that the exhortation ‘let the reader understand’ [or ‘for those who have ears to hear] is appropriate.

# The Word of God is Sufficiently Clear

- [Jesus] is not suggesting that every text is transparent, that understanding is always and in every case automatic or simple. Nevertheless, in general terms the Scriptures can only operate the way they do in Jesus' teaching ministry because they are assumed to make sense *as they stand*. This assumption enables him to hold accountable those who claim to know the Scriptures but fail to respond to him with repentance and faith."

- Thompson, 87.

# Jesus' intolerance of not understanding

- "Are you also still without understanding?" (Matthew 15:16)
- And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?" (Mark 8:17-18).
- "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke 24:25)
- They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. (John 8:27)

# Jesus' intolerance of not understanding

- “[T]he Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people. But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”

# The Word of God is Sufficiently Clear

- Jesus expects this of how people read the OT in addition to how they hear him
- Genesis 12.
- Genesis 15.
- Genesis 22.
- Exodus 3.
- Numbers 23, Rev 2:14.

# How Jesus responded to the most well read Biblical Scholars of his day...

- Have you not read (Matthew 12:3; 19:4; 22:31)
- Have you never read in the Scriptures (Matthew 21:42)
- But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29)
- Go and learn what this means (Matthew 9:13)
- And if you had known what this means (Matthew 12:7)
- And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? (Matthew 15:3)
- "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things (John 3:10)

## God is clear

- The understanding and believing response is what God expects from those who love Him when they receive his word. God expects those He has called to understand, and is intolerant of misunderstanding. He is merciful in our error, but he will be shown to be who he is in spite of our error, which will be a day that those who are in error will not want to see.