

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Holy Scriptures (2)

A. Introduction

1. Two things we are commanded to do as elders are to watch and to hold.

We are to watch what we believe, to make sure we are believing what God's Word says.

"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." (1 Timothy 4:16)

We are to hold firmly to the truths taught in God's Word.

"He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." (Titus 1:9)

2. It is vital we do these two things, not just for our own sake, but also for the members of this church and in fact those who live in the community God has placed us in.

To help us to watch and to hold, we're going to spend our elders' meeting working through the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith a paragraph or so at a time.

The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith is a brilliant summary of what the Bible teaches about the major doctrine of the Christian faith, and it covers them in more detail than the Doctrinal Basis of the FIEC that we use as local church.

3. The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith begins with the doctrine of Holy Scripture.

The first paragraph is about the necessity of Scripture, and shows that the Bible is necessary because general revelation is insufficient and because special revelation is complete.

But this raises the question – What writings are Scripture?

The answer is given in the second and third paragraphs which are about the identity of Scripture.

"Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these:

OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation.

All of which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.

The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon or rule of the Scripture, and, therefore, are of no authority to the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings."

The identity of Scripture is about which books are and which books are not the Word of God, and therefore, which books have and which books do not have authority in the church.

B. Only the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament are God's Word

1. Which books are the Word of God?

"Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments..."

"All of which are given by the inspiration of God."

The 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament are inspired by God.

God by His Holy Spirit used the intellect, skills, and personality of men to write down His own words and they are found in the books of the Old and New Testaments.

"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (1 Peter 1:20-21)

How do we know that these books were inspired by God?

2. We know that the 39 books of the Old Testament were inspired by God because:

These books were recognised as God's Word by God's Old Testament people.

"What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God." (Romans 3:1-2)

These books were recognised as God's Word by the apostles.

"All Scripture is God-breathed..." (2 Timothy 3:16)

These books were recognised as God's Word by the Lord Jesus Himself.

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." (Luke 24:27)

"He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." (Luke 24:44)

3. We know that the 27 books of the New Testament were inspired by God because of:

Their author – they were written by an apostle or a companion of an apostle.

Their agreement – they are in line with the what the rest of Scripture teaches.

Their acceptance – they were already recognised as God's Word by the early church.

"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes in the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:15-16)

4. Which books are not the Word of God?

"The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon or rule of the Scripture..."

The Apocrypha is a collection of books that were written in the 400-year period between the end of the Old Testament and the coming of Christ, and approved by the Roman Catholic Church as inspired at the Council of Trent in 1546.

How do we know that these books were not inspired by God?

These books were never recognised as God's Word by God's Old Testament people.

These books were never recognised as God's Word by the apostles or the Lord Jesus Himself.

These books were never recognised as God's Word by the early church.

Some of these books contain errors and do not agree with what the rest of Scripture teaches.

We must recognise that only the books of the Old and New Testament are God's Word.

C. Only the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament have authority in the church

1. Which books have authority in the church?

"Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments... All of which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life."

The Old and New Testaments speak with authority about what God wants us to believe (faith) and how He wants us to behave (life).

2. Which books do not have authority in the church?

"The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon or rule of the Scripture, and, therefore, are of no authority to the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings."

The Apocrypha, or any other human writings and traditions, do not speak with authority about God wants us to believe (faith) and how He wants us to behave (life).

We must recognise that only the books of the Old and New Testament have authority in the church.

D. How then shall we lead?

1. We must encourage the church to recognise that every book of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, as God's Word by reading and teaching every book of the Bible.

A key task we have as elders is to ensure that the church receives a healthy preaching diet of books from both the Old and New Testaments.

"For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God." (Acts 20:27)

2. We must be on guard against elevating or treating traditions or personal preference with the same authority as what is contained in the Old and New Testaments.