

## The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture

*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God*<sup>1</sup>. Our foundation for this topic is the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the centrality of his birth, his life in teaching and example, his atoning death and triumphant resurrection. *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth.*<sup>2</sup> Scripture bears testimony to the Triune God as most fully revealed through the living Word, the Christ.

Secondary to this is the traditional Baptist understanding of Scripture as sole authority<sup>3</sup> and the Priesthood of all Believers<sup>4</sup>. The Old and New Testament comprised of 66 canonical books are God-breathed and central to the faith and life of all who embrace God's earthly and eternal kingdom as inaugurated in and through Christ. It is the primal source and basis for all teaching and instruction wherever God's people gather. As each follower of Christ is a priest, able to stand freely before God with only Christ as our mediator, we are each to engage directly with Scripture through the guidance of God's Holy Spirit.

Scripture is our sole authority, not necessarily a specific interpretation of the Scripture. No human interpretation is ***beyond re-examination***. Doctrines and creeds become orthodox as lived out among God's people through the testimony of time and endurance. God is ever-active in transforming the lives of his people and continues to inspire (breathe life) enlighten and empower his Church through its interaction with the written text under the direction of the Holy Spirit and guarded by the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ. God's word speaks to community; is lived out and sustained within community and therefore it is the responsibility of the whole community as *iron sharpens iron*<sup>5</sup> to discover God's Living Word within the text of Scripture.

The Word of God, while timeless, is fathomless in its depths of truth.<sup>6</sup> We affirm useful tools of scholarship for insight into the original language, historical culture, and literary genres to aid in understanding and life application. We acknowledge that *Scripture interprets Scripture* as a reminder that the interpretation of individual verses live within the overall message of God's revelation to bring a consistent understanding of the nature and character of God and his desire for all his creation.

We see throughout the history of God's people that a majority is not necessarily the arbitrator of truth, as God spoke through prophets to rebuke and correct faulty beliefs and practices of the majority while praising the faithful remnant as his own. Consensus is not always possible but humility and respect is essential in our seeking out God's dynamic word to teach, reproof, correct and train in righteousness.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John 1:1

<sup>2</sup> John 1:14

<sup>3</sup> II Tim 3:16

<sup>4</sup> I Peter 2:9

<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 27:17

<sup>6</sup> I Corinthians 2: 9 - 11

<sup>7</sup> II Timothy 3: 16