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B1147 – December 4, 2011
Authority In Scripture

We're working on The Historical Maturing of the Church, how the Church grew from infancy, which we might say is the first 500 years of the Church. In the infancy period we have the Church recognizing it was distinct from Israel. Then we have the Canon, which is the completion and recognition of what books are Scripture so we have a basis of authority. Then we have Christ, the working out of the person of Christ and formal recognition that He is God and man in one person, the hypostatic union. That works its way out into considering a multiplicity in the Godhead, so the Trinity came next. Those four things, the Church/Israel Distinction, the Canon of Scripture and Authority, the Person of Christ and the Trinity. Those were the first four things that got worked out in the infancy period of the Church.

We covered some of this last time; we looked at the Completion and Recognition of the NT Canon. There are several things that we want to mention. Notice the difference between "completion" and "recognition." No one doubts that the Canon was complete in those first centuries, I mean no one who's orthodox. The recognition however took time and has come to be a debate that still continues between Protestants and Catholics. We want to go through that dispute some today.

We mentioned that when God closes the Canon the kind of literature that comes at the tail end of the Canon is apocalyptic literature; in the OT Daniel, Ezekiel, in the NT Revelation. So when God is going to go silent for awhile he gives apocalyptic literature which is to generate hope, to remind us that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

We said, because God speaks and goes silent then speaks and goes silent, that a Canon is required. Because of that it has to be written down to

preserve accurately the revelation. I took you to John 14:26 to show that the Holy Spirit would bring these things to mind so the apostles could write them down accurately. I took you to Rom 3 to show that the custodians of Scripture were the Jews. I want to add another Scripture to that, Luke 1.

On the way there I want to review two words we dealt with back at Mount Sinai and in the Life of Christ, but it bears repeating. One is the Doctrine of Revelation and the other is the Doctrine of Inspiration. Those two are not the same. Revelation is everything God's done: His handiwork reveals Him, everything in nature reveals Him, what He did during the OT that wasn't written down (we don't have that) was revelation. All the words of Jesus we don't have, but that was revelation. God is revealing himself constantly down through history, so if you think of revelation as a big circle containing everything God has revealed, inspiration is a little circle inside that big circle that refers only to the written Scripture, so it's a subset of revelation.

As far as the methods God used to inspire Scripture, to have men produce Scripture, He used a variety of means. One is dictation. But only a few things are dictation: the Ten Commandments at Mt Sinai, some portions of Jeremiah. Most is not dictation. He spoke through dreams. He spoke through visions. He spoke through research. Notice in Luke 1:1, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us," notice "many" have done that. We don't have all those documents, a lot of those God didn't inspire. "...many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, 2just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, 3it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; 4so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught." Obviously he's writing to a believer, apparently a guy who might have needed a court brief for Paul's defense before Caesar in Rome. But the point is Luke did research. So inspiration can be by dictation, it can be done by vision, it can be done by dream, it can be by research, that's Luke.

There are many different ways of inspiration and when you read the Bible you have to be mindful of the method that God used to inspire that text. Luke is a fantastically accurate historian. He is a detail guy. Think about this. Where in the Bible do you have fine details of geography in Asia, details

about the location of this city, where this region started and that one ended? Where do you find details of the Roman military? Clear knowledge of what a centurion is, what a cohort is, what cohort certain people were from? It's all in Luke. You had to be a pretty good researcher to put all those fine details in print. But if you have a court brief to write you better know the fine details. So Luke gives us insights in this method of inspiration.

Turn to 2 Timothy; a verse we read every Sunday but this is the central NT passage on the inspiration of Scripture. 2 Tim 3:16 is easy to remember if you know John 3:16, think of 2 Tim 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for" only some good works? "equipped for every good work." There is some internal logic to verse 16-17, and you want to watch this. Verses 16-17 teach not only the inspiration of Scripture, but these verses teach the sufficiency of Scripture. What do we mean by the sufficiency of Scripture? Suppose the Scriptures aren't sufficient? If I say the Scriptures are insufficient for every good work, what can of worms does that open up? Well, maybe some other revelation in some other religious book can bring about some good works. But if the Scriptures are sufficient then do we want to be playing around with any other revelation? No. Do we need dreams, visions, and all kinds of prophecy to continue? No. The claim that you do implies the Scriptures are not sufficient for "every good work."

That has become a debate down in church history. Since we're on this period of the first 500 years I want to show you how it trickled down to our own day. At the time of the Reformation there was a big argument that was never resolved in the sense that everybody got on the same page. In the days of the Reformation, in the 1500's, the Protestants pointed out there were things the Catholic Church was enforcing as dogma that were not Scriptural. So to respond to this attack the Catholics held their own independent council, called the Council of Trent. They met from 1546 till 1563, they broke up here and there but they met from time to time over almost 20 years. By the time it was all said and done they listed as Canonical things like the Apocrypha and they did so to support the very doctrines the Protestants claimed were not Scriptural. So the solution was, we have these 66 books, the Protestants say the 66 books are sufficient, but we need 14 more books called Apocrypha, which is not Scripture. By the way, how do we know they're not Scripture?

Because they are written by Jews and no Jew ever recognized them as Scripture. We'll come back to that in a minute.

Another issue in 2 Tim 3:16 is the word "Scripture," does that refer to the OT only or the NT? Apparently it's OT because in verse 15 Timothy was raised on it by his grandmother and there wasn't any NT at the time. So to get the NT in as Scripture we have another 3:16, 2 Peter 3:16 making these all easy to remember; John 3:16; 2 Tim 3:16, and now 2 Pet 3:16. The reason this passage is important is this shows you that as the NT was being written, it was already recognized to be Scripture. 2 Pet 3:15, "Regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16a as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand." Peter is saying this guy Paul wrote tough stuff; he is a fellow Jew and an apostle and he says Paul is hard to understand. Boy, you have to admit that this Paul is the Holy Spirit used to lay out the entire doctrine of the NT Church Age. And we're still fumbling around with it. Let's continue the verse, "Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you 16a as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort," even in Paul's day there were people taking his writings out of context, saying that Paul taught this when he did not teach this, the same stuff that goes on today. Now here's the significant point in this passage, "...as they do also the rest" of what? "of the Scriptures," so here is a clear NT reference to the fact that Paul's NT writings were already considered on par with OT Scripture. Very early on Paul's writings were recognized as part of the Canon. This is as the NT canon is coming into existence.

We want to go to the battle over the Church recognizing the Canon. We have a situation where the Greek Orthodox Church, the Eastern Church, the Jews and the Protestants all agree as to what the OT is. Roman Catholics do not agree with what the OT is, and this has raised a large argument that has gone on, and that's why I'm talking about it. We're not worried about what the OT is but I'm going to use that as a teaching tool.

First we're going to look at the OT definition, because obviously the OT forms a chunk of what is called the Canon. If we are to agree that the Canon is the inspired writings or the inspired word of God, then it follows logically that

you've got to have a list of the books that are in the Canon. And you've got to have a list of OT books and NT books. I have a Roman Catholic Bible with the Apocrypha in it. Between the Old and New Testaments is a separate set of books called the Apocrypha. The problem at the Reformation was that Luther and others were looking at the text of Scripture, the actual recognized canon at the time, because the Apocrypha was not recognized as Scripture at the time. Jerome, who had translated the Bible into Latin centuries before set the Apocrypha off from Scripture in his translation. And the Reformers were saying that the practices of the Roman Catholic Church, things like indulgences, prayers to angels, prayers for the dead, purgatory, these kinds of things were abuses and needed to be corrected. That's why they set out to reform the church, to purge it from these abuses. The Roman Catholic Church came back at the Council of Trent and declared the Apocrypha, which supports these teachings, as canon. So if you pick up a Roman Catholic Bible you'll find these 14 extra books. These books were written by Jews in Greek before the time of Christ and they contain accounts of historical events. But they have historical errors. They can still be helpful reading to get an idea of what happened between the testaments, they can help you with word studies, but they're not Scripture. Nevertheless, there is still debate about whether they're Scripture since the Protestant Reformation.

The debate is serious because obviously the canon is defining a rule or authority or standard for life. Where does the authority lie? Because wherever it lies that is what 2 Tim 3:16 says is sufficient for every good work. And if the Scripture is sufficient, *sola Scriptura*, I need the Scriptures plus nothing. So what are the Scriptures? Did the Church recognize the list right early on or did they get it wrong? That's what the issue is.

Very early the Church recognized the OT books that the Jewish community thought of as canonical. Why is it important to reference what the Jewish community thinks? Why don't we just ignore what the Jewish community thinks and say the Church can define for itself? What does Rom 3:1 say? What's one role of the Jews? To give us the Scriptures. So you'd better listen to what the Jewish people say, it's their book. And the OT books they recognized are the exact same books that we Protestants have in our Bibles. Very early the Church recognized the OT books that the Jewish community thought of as canonical. No one debates that; Roman Catholic scholars do not debate that. They openly admit that the Jewish Canon is as the Protestant

Bible. Here's the reference, The New Catholic Encyclopedia says: "For the OT, however, Protestants follow the Jewish Canon." What does that do to the Apocrypha? It means that the Jewish community never recognized them as authoritative. There's a reason why they didn't. If you read the book of 1 and 2 Maccabees, they get into a big jam. They don't know what to do, and they say because we have no prophet in our generation, and we don't know what the will of God is, therefore we won't do anything. So the people who wrote this knew that in their day they had no prophet; which raises an interesting issue, how would they know if they had a prophet or not, because they did have false prophets. So they must have tested them according to the tests in Deut 13 and 18 and they knew clearly that the prophetic line had ended. So these guys knew God wasn't talking, it was a period of silence; the testimony is in their own book. So there's no question that Protestants and Jews agree that the Apocrypha is not inspired literature and therefore not on the list of OT books.

The Roman Catholics disagreed. Here's how they argued: they went back to the Councils of Hippo and Carthage under Augustine. That's around AD397-400 time frame, and they claim that the church at that point was recognizing this as well as the Jewish OT. Their argument hinges on what Augustine said. Augustine referred to a list of books that were to be read in the church, and when he wrote, he wrote that there were three kinds of books that he was writing about. He says first there is the Canon of inspired Scripture of the OT and NT. Second are what he calls the ecclesiastical writings which were read in the church, but they were not authoritative for defining doctrine. He classified the Apocrypha in this second category of books that the Church circulated. The third classification was books that were circulating but which were not considered orthodox, and those were heterodox and they were condemned. So you have three classes of books: the books that we have in our Bible, the Apocrypha plus some other books, and the third class is the heretical books. The Apocrypha is in between books; they were kind of useful for history and linguistics and they were read but not for doctrine.

So what happened was, because Augustine talked about it that way, he used the word "Canon" to include category one plus category two. But if you read him, when he's talking about this he makes a distinction between category one and category two. He clearly says only category one books can be used for

doctrine; category two books are used just to fill in historical gaps. But he unfortunately used canon to describe both category one and category two. That's why, in the Council of Trent which happened after the Protestant Reformation many, many centuries later, the Apocrypha was declared to be canonical. In *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* it says: "According to Catholic doctrine the proximate criterion of the Biblical Canon is the infallible decision of the Church." You've got to be careful of that one. They're saying the Church, by which they mean the Roman Catholic Church, is infallible and so the infallible decision of the Church defines the Canon.

But the problem is that the list came into existence and Paul says in Gal 1 once these books get generated by the Holy Spirit, the whole church must be subservient to those books. So whereas the Church, yeah, it's the physical source of the books but after it's the physical source of the books it subsumes itself under the authority of those books just like Israel did with the OT canon. There's no difference here between the Church and Israel in this area, because wasn't Israel the source of the OT? Yeah. Weren't Israelite prophets the writers? Yeah. Did the OT come out of the nation Israel? Yeah. But which was the authority, Israel or the OT? It was the OT. So this is where we differ, and I'm just bringing this out, again not to cause a big religious fight, I just want you to be clear on where we differ. Here's one of them: "According to Catholic doctrine the proximate criterion of the Biblical Canon is the infallible decision of the Church." We would disagree entirely with that. The Protestant position was that the word of God was determined by the infallible decision of God in His providence.

"Moreover, this decision was not given until rather late in the history of the Church at the Council of Trent." The Council of Trent is after Luther and Calvin; it was in response to them. That's why Catholic orthodoxy is called Tridentine Catholicism. What do they mean by that term, Tridentine Catholicism? It means Catholicism as it hardened up after the Reformation at the Council of Trent. If you ever really want to read what Roman Catholicism believes, not what some American Catholic... American Catholics aren't good Catholics, but if you really want to read what Italian Catholics believe and the *real* Catholics believe, not phony American Catholics, read what the Italian Catholics read about Trent. In Trent it's all let out, it's all there just as clear as can be. And I'll guarantee you you could take the Council of Trent writings and go up to the average American

Catholic and they wouldn't know what's going on, any more, frankly, than you could take the Bible and put it up to the average Protestant and they wouldn't know what's going on. Same problem, nobody reads!

The point here is that you have to have a criteria for canon; turn to Eph 2:20 to see it. It's this concept that we're getting at, this foundation period of the Church, this 500 year period, when all these things were defined. According to Eph 2:20 Paul believed the Church had already been founded in his day, that the founding activity was already settled, finished: "Having been built" past tense, "having been built "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, 21in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing" present tense "into a holy temple in the Lord." So it was founded, past tense, it is now growing, present tense. Relating it to what we're saying, notice in verse 20 it's a foundation based on whom? Apostles and prophets. What was one of the key functions of apostles and prophets? What did they do? They wrote Scripture, they received revelation.

Remember I said the Maccabees knew that they did not have prophets in their time, and therefore they couldn't do certain things and they actually buried stuff. And they say we don't know what to do with this stuff so we're going to bury it until a prophet comes along and tells us what to do. That's the Jewish mentality, without a prophet you don't do anything. The revelation through apostles and prophets Paul says is the foundation of the Church, Christ the cornerstone, the critical piece. And since it's done, you don't need apostles and prophets any more; their work is finished with the completion of Scripture. This is another key point, The Disappearance of Certain Spiritual Gifts. The reasons these gifts disappear is because their purpose disappeared. If you build a house, you pour the foundation and then you get on with the rest of the building. But to hear some Christians, you'd think that what you're supposed to do is just keep pouring the foundation every day. But that's a misunderstanding; that violates the whole metaphor of a building. Once the foundation is built, it's finished, now there are other gifts needed to build it up. But the speaking gifts have ceased. God has not spoken publicly since the time of the apostle John. Why? He doesn't have anything to say. Why doesn't He have anything to say? Because He's already said everything He wants to say for now. The Scriptures are sufficient! But I need a miracle, I need to have it confirmed to me. What did Jesus say in the

gospels to the guy who said, Jesus, if you'd just do a miracle they'd believe. Remember what He said? He said if they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they won't believe if there's a resurrection in front of their face. If people won't believe the Scripture that's already generated, they wouldn't believe if Jesus raised this podium off the ground and it flew around the room. No way! Well, yes we would, it would be empirical. No you wouldn't, because you'd come up with some other explanation, just a freak accident or something. We don't need anything else, we have God's word on it.

When we come to the disappearance of certain gifts we understand there were these founding gifts, and if we take a timeline, from 30AD on these things phased out; we know from church history they phased out. The apostles and prophets disappeared very fast, and a lot of the miraculous gifts disappeared. In fact, looking at the book of Hebrews, another little verb tense, another little detail in the text but a very useful detail in the text because in Heb 2:3 it says, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord," the first phase of NT revelation, the Gospels, "it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4God also bearing witness with them both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." Verse 4 is a series of participles that explain and expand the main verb of verse 3. What is the main verb in verse 3 that is expanded by verse 4? It "was confirmed." What tense is the verb "was confirmed," past, present or future? It's past. An aorist tense, it just means it was done being confirmed, it's not happening anymore, the author of Hebrews admits, I didn't see the miracles, it was confirmed to me by those who did see them. Isn't this interesting, apparently all the gifts, all the miracles, all the signs and all the wonders finished their work by the time the book of Hebrews was written, that's 67AD, just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, 70AD. That doesn't mean they didn't perhaps continue here and there but the point is that these gifts were not common by 67AD.

There are certain temporary spiritual gifts that cease, they were critical for the foundation of the church and, there are other gifts that continue down through the Church Age; the gift of pastor, the gift of teacher, the gift of giving, the gift of mercy, etc., continue for the building of the church. The point here is that gifts have a function in the body of Christ, and if you understand the Church grows with time, these gifts are very important, they

really are important. In fact, if you turn to 1 Cor it's a very interesting section, 1 Cor 13:8-10, think of this in the light of Paul talking about the spiritual gifts in the Church. "Love never fails," that's the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. By the way, we're not saying that miracles ceased; miracles probably happen somewhere every day. It's just that they're not being done through people in the way they were being done in the NT period. Verse 8, "Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part," or literally the text "we know bit by bit, and we prophesy bit by bit," the idea is that revelation was still coming during the period in which Corinthians was written. Verse 10, "but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away." Now there's a debate of what "the perfect" is. I tend to believe that "perfect" means when the canon was finished, because the word "perfect" here is a neuter.

Nevertheless, notice in verse 11 what follows, "When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things." He's talking about maturity and growth, that's maturity of the Church Age. Maturity comes with what? With revelation. You can't grow beyond the canon of Scripture. When Scripture was being written, these three gifts, all of which are involved in what? Revelation. They're all tools of verbal revelation. When the canon was finished why do you need those verbal revelation gifts? Now that the foundation is laid, why do you need to keep laying the foundation again? The point is you don't, but you do need to build on that foundation with other gifts.

Continuing in 1 Cor 14. He's specifically addressed the use of tongues in the congregation. Then he says, verse 20, "Brethren, do not be children in your thinking, yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature." What he's saying is get this. Verse 21, "In the Law it is written," and now he quotes an OT text. If you have a study Bible you'll see in the margin it's Isaiah 28, "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me," says the Lord. 22 So then," so Paul is concluding something by referencing an Isaiah passage out of the OT. What's this bit in Isaiah about "men of strange tongues?" Who are they? Gentiles who speak foreign languages," which, by the way, shows you here he's talking about real languages, not some weird stuff, these are real languages. Isaiah said to the Jews of his generation, by men of Gentile

languages I'm going to speak to you. Thinking about Isaiah, what was going on in the OT? Israel was going down and God was angry at them for rejecting His revelation, so He said you people won't listen to revelation through your own language, then I am going to speak to you by foreign language. So it's interesting that he says, verse 22, "tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers, but those who believe." Then he goes on to give regulations to the tongues thing.

Tongues are just one thing; the big idea is not tongues. The big idea is in the Protestant reaction, because Luther and Calvin went back to the text, they insisted on the cessation of certain gifts. They weren't fighting the issue of tongues, they weren't fighting that issue so much as they were fighting apostles and prophets. Why do you suppose the Reformers fought against present day apostles and prophets? Why do you think they insisted that the apostles and prophets are no longer? Because they were simultaneously insisting that the Scriptural Canon had already been generated and it was set in concrete, no continuing line of apostles and prophets. Rome has to have a continuing line of apostles and prophets to give them the authority, we locate authority in the completed canon of Scripture, and they locate it in the Church. See how this fits together?

It's interesting, down through history everybody who has tried to fight with the Bible has always brought apostles and prophets back in some way, shape or form. Think of Mormonism, what does Mormonism say? We're the Latter Day Saints, latter day meaning the end of the Church Age, the Latter Day Saints. What do they mean by Latter Day Saints? They mean that the prophets have come back again, Joseph Smith and the Mormon prophets. What do they do? They generate more Scripture. What did Joseph Smith write? *The Book of Mormon*. So they are logically consistent, but in order to negate the Scripture Satan always has to at least have some truth so what he tries to do is get people convinced a prophet can come back so we can get people to follow this prophet's writings, which will gradually negate the Bible, and now you have this false prophetic text.

Islam does the same thing. What is Mohammed called? The prophet, and through Mohammed is supposed to come Scripture, and we have the Koran. And what's the Koran, the new updated revelation of God. See how it works? So the Protestants alert to that said no, prophets were necessary only at the

foundation stage of the Church and you don't need them any more because of *sola Scriptura*, the sufficiency of Scripture.

Here's a long quote from Alva McClain and it's a wonderful observation about how these gifts went away, particularly in this case the gift of miraculous healing, he lists several verses you can trace out, he says, "In the fifth chapter of Acts "every one" of the sick who were brought from various cities to Jerusalem "were healed" by the apostles (5:16). Twenty five years later we find the greatest of all the apostles being denied his own earnest prayer for a well body (II Cor. 12:7-9). And as we near the end, we hear him advising Timothy to take a little wine for his "often infirmities" (I Tim. 5:23). Still later we learn that he has left another beloved worker "sick" at Miletum (II Tim. 4:20)... At the beginning and through the history of the Acts there were special and miraculous gifts by which divine revelation was channeled to men. These are named by Paul as the gifts of "knowledge," "prophecy," and "tongues" (I Cor. 12:8-10) but in the same context he warns that they will "cease" (1 Cor 13:8). The permanent things will be faith, hope, and love (vs. 13)." So it's obvious there's a transition period when these things were fading out and these gifts ceased. You do not have a continuing authority abiding in men, you have the authority resting in the completed canon that was recognized clearly by 367AD, Athanasius was the man of the hour there too as he has noted the 27 books in your NT and you can't come along 1200 years later and add to the OT canon books that are contrary to what the Jews recognized as OT books.

To sum up what we've said, I've been going on about the Canon because of one issue and one issue only. What is the standard of truth? What is the authority for life? Does the authority structure reside in a tradition in a church or does the authority structure reside in the Scriptures? We have Jesus facing the same issue in the Gospels. What was the chief problem Jesus had authority wise with the Pharisees? What authority were they quoting over against Jesus? Their traditions. What did Jesus say about their traditions? They nullified the word of God. Think of the Sermon on the Mount; "You have heard it said, but I say unto you." Now when He quoted "you have heard it said," what was He referring to? What they had heard in synagogue and what had they heard in synagogue? Tradition. What did He refer to when He said, "but I say to you." The word of God. He should know, He authored it at Mt Sinai. So He's making a high claim in that sermon. By

the end of it what do the people recognize? This guy's unique, this guy speaks as one having authority and not as a scribe. So He's warring against their tradition that they set up over and against the word of God.

So if you think about it, if you have time take a concordance and look up the word "tradition" and watch how Jesus uses it; it's always used in a derogatory fashion. And in all the debates, tradition is always derogatorily spoken of, because Jesus hated tradition? No. He insisted, however, no matter how comfortable you are with it, it does not stand on the level of authority with the Scriptures. So in this, then we are summing up; what we are saying is that in the foundational period of the Church, God through the special gifts of apostles and prophets, gave the Church the Scriptures, and the Scriptures are the authority for the rest of the Church Age. Whether the Church recognizes it or not and whether the Church follows it or not, that's another issue. But this has been brought into existence, and really the Church had recognized it by 300-400 AD, and they really did have it down, and it was only sloppy use of the word canon by Augustine that got the Apocrypha involved in the mess.

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