

Lesson six to nine (Audio lecture five to eight)

Lesson six (Audio lecture five)

Logic – what is a good argument and what is a bad argument –why?

We must be especially careful when using logical argument in any area of theology where there is mystery involved – eg God’s Sovereignty and human responsibility.

*My own notation here. Man seems to revel in his ability to reason. Indeed volumes of books have been written ‘reasoning’ one point of view or another. Logic is all part of that reasoning – it is our highest level of argument and we assume that if one argues his viewpoint and it is well reasoned and meets all the rules of logic, of which there are many, than ts must be true. And so man through the ages has misled himself. There is one power greater than the most learned man’s reasoning ability and logic and that is God’s **revelation** given us through the Comforter, the Holy Spirit by the Word of God. God’s revelation often confounds man’s logic and reasoning. This frustrates man. The fundamental difference is that God’s revelation is truth in its purest form. Unfortunately man’s reason can at times distort God’s revelation. It is none the less, truth! It is faith that allows us to disregard logic and out innate reasoning and hold to revelation. His truth!*

God’s Sovereignty and human responsibility

eg **Gen 50:19, 20** Josephs bros are afraid of Joseph and Joseph is moved. They make a plea bargain and Joseph replies “Am I in the place of God? You intended it for evil but God **intended** it for good” God’s intensions were good and it would take place. The brothers intensions were bad and they were still held responsible.

Isaiah 10:5...To Assyria He says...

“You are the staff of my indignation, the rod of my anger. I send you against a wicked nation (the Jews) to destroy.” And then God will destroy Assyria. Why? Because they are accountable for their actions. *Now doesn’t this fly in the face of logic! We might call it unfairness, but it is logically unfair in the eyes of most unbelievers.*

Phil 2:11,12

Phi 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out** your own salvation with fear and trembling, for **it is God who works in you**, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Act 4

The believers are first facing persecution – they cite Psalm 2 “Why do the nations rage, why do the heathens gather against the Lord and His anointed” then Acts says Act 4:27 “for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do **whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.**

Systematic Theology (framework) – some believe this is putting together a whole picture of everything from a theistic point of view. Problem – we do not know enough to do this – we are not omniscient so we cannot put the whole thing together. Yet those who reject a systematic

theology tend to drift towards illogical theology – there is no bases, framework for their theology.

The Bible is like a jigsaw puzzle with instructions that say **pieces are missing**. The pieces all belong – but some are missing. Those with Systematic theology try to ram all the pieces in to MAKE them fit – but we look closely and see mistakes and you get a god who is much smaller than God. *They try to make God fit their logical, reasoning minds.*

In the second state (those who will not use Systematic Theology) you do not have any coherent revelation. *I am not sure what Carson is getting at here.*

The best systematic theology recognizes that there are holes in the system and there have to be because we are finite and simple. **God has not revealed it all**. He has though, given us more than enough to worship and glorify Him. We may not understand. *In other words it may not be logical to us but by faith we believe – so different from the theology of man that desires to prove all beliefs with logical reasoning.*

The end of the exercise is not to see the whole puzzle – to fully understand, but to say , I understand but I repent, believe and obey. *This is not logic – this is revelation – praise the Lord!*

So we defend systematic theology – there is unity. But we cannot put pieces where they do not belong – and there will be missing pieces this side of eternity.

In areas where there are deep mysteries bound up with the very character and person of God be very careful what inferences you draw from Biblical truth. **You can draw inferences that cancel out other truths and therefore deny the Word of God.**

Structure – it is helpful in Biblical interpretation to recognize a fairly elementary literary structures...there are several...a few

1. Inclusion

Matt 5:3-12 the beatitudes. There is a change in the structure – how the words are presented – poetic form. The last beatitude is verse 10 (11 and 12 are an expansion of verse 10). The first and last beatitude have the same ending “for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” this constitutes and “inclusion” This tells us the beginning and end and the importance of this passage. In this instance is talking about the norms of the *Kingdom*.

Eg **Matt 7:12** the golden rule that sums up the *law and the prophets* which we read in Matt 5:17 – the only two places where the *Law and prophets* are mentioned so 5:17 – 7:12 is the body of the sermon on the mount...bracketed by the *law and the prophets*.

This is a literary inclusion. Jesus is laying out some fundamental ways in which His followers are to read the *law and the prophets*.

Lesson seven – audio lecture six

Faithfulness...

E.g. Joseph's temptation by Potiphar's wife resulting in his being thrown into prison. Success is not measured in your station in life but in fidelity to God. God is able to bless regardless of your situation – whether slave or in prison. Joseph would go on to great things leading ultimately to the exodus, the ten commandments and the birth of Christ.

2. Chiasms ABCDCBA

Matt 23: 13-32 listing of seven woes. First and seventh woes the same - 2 and 6th - 3rd and 5th with a focus on the middle woe.

3. Parallelism - Hebrew writing is full of parallelism. It is full of imagery. As the _____.so is the _____. It is full of repetition, comparison _____ is better _____ than _____.

Eg Psalm 1 Blessed is the man...his delight is in the law of the Lord...whatever he does prospers...not so the wicked...the Lord watches over the way of the righteous. Each line supports the previous line. Description of just and unjust in each verse. Variation on this in this psalm. The just is _____.the unjust is not_____.The next verse, the just is NOT_____ the unjust IS_____.

4. Literary Genre eg fables, wisdom literature – which is not law, history, apocalyptic - how you handle the text depends on the genre.

New Hermeneutic.

Classical hermeneutics developed rules by which we understand the text – this approach was based on the positivism of 19th century theology. Historians now reject this because this comes down to the conclusion that history is based on your own subjectivity - all history becomes interpretive history based on the developed rules of the day.

When I approach the Bible I come with baggage – genes, presuppositions, training, attitude, mood, ideas – they all cause me to ask certain things about the text and therefore what I get from the text is a function of who I am. My very encounter with the text then gives me new experience so that the next time I approach the text I approach differently. Therefore it is difficult to speak of objective truth. *Impossible??* Meaning has less to do with the location of the text than with me and my presuppositions (baggage).

Black, feminine, African hermeneutic – we are all biased in our interpretations.

We are finite. We cannot know everything and will make mistakes in our interpretation. If you look at the dominant exegesis of a particular culture it may completely disagree with another culture's exegesis.

The danger of the new hermeneutic is that there is no sure word and everyone does that which is right in his own eyes. However New hermeneutics does allow us to see in scripture with eyes that we have never used – that is, we can see through **other** interpretations things we have never seen. We learn cultural humility. We can learn to listen to others and learn from them because they see with different eyes. The question to be asked ~ Is there any **sure** word from God? Yes.

We need to avoid the error of thinking we can know things just as they are **and** the error of endless subjectivity.

Models of understanding the truth of the text...

- A. As I approach the text over and over again I can come closer to understanding the text with each approach.
- B. If my understanding is fused with another's understanding of the text, this helps bring us closer to the truth of the text. The more we hear the closer we get.
- C. **We can have truth without it being perfect truth – It can be truth with error. The truth resides in the text and not in me.**

Lesson eight audio lecture seven

Questions...

1. Variance in the manuscripts. Doctrine always depends on multiple attestations not perfect flawless copying of manuscripts. Therefore there may be variations in the text but the doctrines are never affected because of the multiple teachings of the text. There are areas of errors in every manuscript. The truth of scripture is not in the perfection and purity of the manuscript itself. While we affirm the truth of scripture, the truth of the scripture is not an abstract end to be worshipped in itself. It is the means of taking us to God who has disclosed Himself not only in event and in His son but also in great mercy in His written word.
2. Genre – many literary genres are a mixture. The Gospels are biography but also confession, witness, proclamation. Genesis 1,2,3 are a mixture not mythology, history, creation, symbolism, - but a mixture.
3. Who is responsible for *structure* in writing? Are they from the writer? – or are they from a higher source. Does the **inspiration** of scripture embrace not only words but also structure, literary genre, grammar? YES! *The fruits of common grace* – there are many elements of God's grace that He gives commonly. E.g. – rain, sun, creativity, restraint of evil, joy, talents.
4. Form and Literary genre. Is it useful to 'update' the parables? E.g. the Good Samaritan. ...who is my neighbour? The parable is told to explode a whole world view. The preacher must tell the story with the power that the original story had – difficult to do. Yes it is sometimes helpful to make application that opens a window on the text without destroying the historical particularity of the text but rather to show us what that particularity means. Very difficult to do.

Pluralism

There are different kinds of pluralism. We are discussing philosophical pluralism. This is the belief that no one has the right to say that someone else's philosophical belief is wrong. In the past one might criticise your view but still uphold your right to believe differently. Now there is a philosophical pluralism that says there is no truth – no right answer, that everyone's views are correct. There is no ultimate truth to pursue. We are all saying the truth equally. There is a fundamental rejection in principle about your right to make a claim of truth.

With the old view you tolerated the person but did not tolerate the view. NOW you tolerate the view but do not tolerate the person.

Jesus rose from the dead and we will stand before Him in judgement one day. Before they would say “prove it” – the view is questioned. Now they would say “well what about Hinduism” In other words, are you saying *they* are wrong? The person making the claim is criticized and dismissed as a fundamentalist. It is difficult to share the Gospel.

This new pluralism is here and on the street. Great implications for evangelism.

Christians approach Biblical interpretation in a number of ways because of this philosophical pluralism. Is there a right story from the Bible that would apply to a particular culture? Are there truths in scripture that must apply to all cultures?

There is no expression Biblical or not that is not culturally relevant. Language is a cultural phenomenon.

e.g. “Jesus is Lord” this is a culturally discerned statement. We think of it as a truth that transcends all cultures. Yet the Buddhist will hear this statement as meaning Jesus is less than Buddha because of his cultural beliefs about the word Lord. You need to rearticulate the truth you want to convey. You would need to teach a whole new world view before the Buddhist could ever understand that Jesus is Lord.

The new hermeneutic teaches us that things are relative. The magic is not in the words “Jesus is Lord”. It is in communicating the truth given the particular culture you are talking to.

[Lesson Nine – audio lecture eight](#)

Perspicuity

No church officer can claim an inside track – the scriptures are perspicuous. They are sufficiently clear that ordinary believers must and should read them and can understand them and should obey them. This is the doctrine of the perspicuity of scripture. God has disclosed Himself at times in history to real people with real language. Under the OT God revealed Himself through prophets, priests, sacrifices.

Jer 31:29 - In the Old Covenant God exercised judgement on a covenant community – In the New Covenant...I will write my law on their hearts – there will no longer be anyone to say to his neighbour ‘know the Lord’ for they will know the Lord – the abolition of all mediating teachers. There are teachers in the Christian church but they are not mediators. They will ALL know me. The nature of the New Covenant – **Joel 2, Eze 36 Isaiah 45** – they will all know me. There are teachers but there are no mediating teachers, prophets, priest but Jesus Christ. Under the New Covenant we look to the revelation that God has given and we all have access to it. There is no inside tract. This is the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. This is the perspicuity of scripture.

Role of Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

1Co 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

1Co 2:15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

1Co 2:16 "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

The context begins in 1:18.

1Co 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But Paul tells us that God has revealed this truth to us. The natural person does not get it but the Spiritual one does. We need God's Spirit if we are going to understand God's mind. The natural person cannot understand these things.

The wisdom of the cross over the wisdom of the world. Paul is saying that the person with the Spirit is spiritual, has the Spirit of God and makes judgement about all things. The natural person does not have the Spirit. The natural person cannot understand the person with the Spirit but the Spiritual man can understand the natural for he has been one himself. Within this framework, the understanding of scriptures comes with the Spirit. This does not mean that every Christian is equally gifted with interpretation, teaching of scripture. There is a Spiritual component bound up with understanding the Word.

This text is talking about our whole grasp of the Gospel and what it does for us.

To understand scriptures requires more than the Spirit but also study, literacy, commitment, desire. Our aim is not to master scripture but to be mastered by scripture. We need to be challenged by scripture to obey it even in the hard things.

The Spirit works in all areas of conforming us to Christ – not just in revealing the Gospel.

Oh how I love your Law. I meditate on it all day long.

Psa 119:97-107 Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.

I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.

I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.

I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me.

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules.