

CHRIST CENTRED BIBLE SATURATION

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- [0 : 0 0] The Australia that I was born into was dominated by a philosophical worldview called modernism. Modernism took hold during the 18th century and it trusted human intellect rather than God to solve the world's issues for us and to discover truth.
- There was, however, a general agreement in modernism that there was a right and a wrong and it was universally true and it was absolute and that objective truth could be known.
- But at the time of my, when I was born around 1969, I was born in 1969, but around that kind of time in the 1960s, the tide was starting to change and quite dramatically.
- The worldview known as postmodernism began to emerge and postmodernism believes that there is no objective and absolute truth that is to be understood and accepted, which ironically is in fact an absolute truth claim.
- But that's another point. Each individual is entitled to create and act on their own truth as they perceive it. And this entitles them to live and to do whatever is right in their own eyes.
- [1 : 1 5] The final court of appeal on all religious and moral decisions is personal desire and opinion. This view was captured brilliantly by the American moral and social philosopher Abraham Edel when he wrote in his book Ethical Judgment, It all depends on where you are.
- It all depends on who you are. It all depends on what you feel. It depends on how you feel. It all depends on how you're raised. It all depends on what is praised.
- What's right today is wrong tomorrow. Joy in France, but England sorrow. It all depends on your point of view. Australia or Timbuktu in Rome do as the Romans do.
- If tastes just happen to agree, then you have morality. But where there are conflicting trends, it all depends.
- It all depends. Very few, if any, have consciously adopted a postmodern view of thinking and living.
- [2 : 2 1] Most have taken it on without thought or without critique because it's just part of the cultural soup that we've kind of been marinating in for so long. The rejection of absolute truth sounds great.
- It sounds liberating. It sounds like it brings freedom. But like any truth claims, there are consequences. And so for the postmodernists, life has no meaning.
- It is simply a game. You are the only one who cares about you. There is no story which is universally true. Every claim to truth is simply a grasp of power.
- And so therefore we must trust every claim to truth. It also believes that there's no order. Everything is random. You have only one life.
- There's nothing beyond this. There's no truth. There's nothing else out there. And so live this life with a whole heap of gusto. There's also an ability to say one thing but do something completely different and not be concerned in any sense that there's an inconsistency with that or to even feel any shame associated with that inconsistency.

[3 : 32] And in the worst case scenarios, there is a complete disregard and rejection of all external authority which ultimately, left unchecked, leads to anarchy and chaos.

But ultimately our justice system will ultimately hold you accountable and so postmodernism prepares us for the jails is what it ultimately does. It's one of the great tragedies of our age that there is a flippant attitude towards truth.

Our culture is drifting in a vast ocean with no solid anchor points flipping here and there depending on where the tide's taking us at that particular point.

And this is where our core value of Christ-centered Bible saturation is so essential. It's what our world needs. It's what we need.

This value, like all of our values, we aspire to hold deep in our minds and our hearts and for it to drive and to change our passions and our behavior.

[4 : 45] And so this value, Christ-centered Bible saturation, is so profoundly more important than a verse a day keeps the devil away, can't put an attitude to the Bible.

And one of the aims of what I'm hoping to do here today is to awaken in us a passion for the sheer existence of truth and for it to shape our behavior as we look at this core value and what the scriptures and where we get it from in the scriptures.

So here we go. The Bible makes the claim that truth is what God speaks and it is absolute truth for every culture, every generation, every individual.

And the reason why God's word is absolute truth is because God is absolute reality, ultimate reality. Genesis 1 makes a very significant point that there was no reality before God.

It says, In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and the earth was formless and empty. Before creation, God was.

[6 : 04] He stands outside of all things created. He wasn't part of what was created. God is from everlasting to everlasting. He had no beginning and no end.

And the one who had no beginning, but always was and is and will be, he's the one who defines all things. He is. You remember, for those of you who remember this, Exodus 3, Moses, the burning bush, and God tells Moses to get on back to Egypt and tell Pharaoh, the most powerful man in the world, you better pull your socks up, dude, because God's going to come and smash you.

Got the idea? That's my, that's a whole lot of chapters shrunk in a little bit. And Moses is freaked out by this because, you know, what am I going to do? And he says, well, what if they tell, what if they ask me, who sent me?

Who should I tell them? Bob, Bill, I mean, you know, give us your name. And God says, I am who I am. I just am.

That's it. That's the best way you can define God. He just simply is. Now, if I tried that and said to Isabel, go and tell those people, and they say, well, who sent you?

[7 : 19] And say, well, I am sent me. I mean, that's just pretty much arrogance on my behalf. But when you are ultimate reality, when you're the ultimate being, you just say, I am, I define all things.

My friends, let it hit you, the absoluteness of God's existence. Never beginning, never ending, never becoming, never improving.

Simply and absolutely there to be dealt with on his terms. Or not at all. Whether we want him to be there or not, he is there.

We do not negotiate for what we want reality to be. No ranting and raving or sophisticated doubt or skepticism has any effect on the existence of God.

He simply and absolutely is. And if we don't like it, we can change for our joy. Or we can resist for our destruction. But one thing remains absolutely unchanged.

[8 : 25] God is. He's the main thing in life because he's the main thing in the universe. And he's the main thing in the universe because he's created all that is.

Romans 11, 36. From him and through him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Whichever way you want to come at it, he is.

And it's all about his glory. And so, what that means is, his reality is created by him, determined by him, defined by him. And when God speaks, he reveals reality.

He reveals the way things actually are. Have a look at Psalm 119. It was just read out to us.

Psalm 119, verse 160. It says, All your words are true. All your righteous laws are eternal.

[9 : 27] Now, the word translated all there, in the NIV, literally means head. It can mean the head of a body or the head of a river or the head of a tribe. And the same word there is used in Exodus, chapter 30, verse 12.

When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, it's also used in Numbers, chapter 1, verse 2, which says, Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families.

In both cases, what Psalm 119 translates all, they translate as census. And what I think, verse 160 is saying, is that if you took a census, a survey, of the word of God, then the conclusion of that census and survey would be that the sum total of it is truth.

It is the word of God. It is true. The totality of the Bible is truth. But notice the second half of verse 160. All your righteous laws are eternal.

And so it's not just the sum total is truth. It's all the individual parts which are truth. And so the census would reveal that the whole and the parts are all true.

[10 : 47] They are true because when God, who is ultimate reality, speaks, he reveals the way things actually are.

He reveals reality. 2 Corinthians 3, verse 16, says that all scripture is God breathed. The whole Bible is, comes out from the mouth of God, from the ultimate reality.

And when he speaks, he speaks what is true. So the Bible is where God speaks what is real and absolute.

Now we haven't quite got there yet. We've still got a little bit of work to do here. And so far, we've understood that God is ultimate reality.

And when God speaks, he speaks ultimate reality. He speaks truth. And truth is when ultimate reality and the revelation of ultimate reality or the communication of ultimate reality align with each other.

[11 : 58] That's what truth is. The opposite of truth is lies. And lies are when reality and what I communicate about reality don't align with one another.

I'm feeling really rotten and someone says to me, how are you feeling? I'm okay. Liar. Reality and communication don't align with one another.

The place where reality and the communication and that reality come together in the most profound senses is in the person of Jesus Christ. Firstly, it's because Jesus speaks truth. Jesus says this.

John chapter 18. Go to John because we're going to be lingering there for a little bit. So John chapter 18. We're going to go to the back and then move our way forward. So have that in mind. John chapter 18 verse 37.

Jesus says, For this I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.

[12 : 59] And Jesus is saying there that he speaks truth and if you want truth, you listen to what Jesus says. But he says something even more profound than that a couple of chapters earlier in John 14.

He says this in verse 6. I am the way, the truth, and the life. And no one comes to the Father except through me.

He doesn't just speak the truth. He says, I am the truth. I am where ultimate reality and the communication of ultimate reality come together in perfect alignment.

And he could only say that if he was, in fact, God himself. Which is, of course, what John chapter 1 says. Flick over to John chapter 1.

Remember what we've seen? Ultimate reality. God existed before ultimate reality. Sorry, his ultimate reality because he existed before all things were created. He defines everything. Beginning of the Bible.

[14 : 10] Before anything was made, God was. John chapter 1, verse 1. In the beginning was the Word. Now the Word existed before anything was made.

And the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Verse 3. Through him, that is, through the Word, all things were made. Without him, nothing has been made that has been made.

And so the Word existed before anything was created. The Word made everything and the Word is God. That is, the Word is ultimate reality.

The Word is absolute truth. Then down into verse 14, we see something startling. this Word became flesh and made his dwelling amongst us.

And we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father full of grace and truth. And so the question is, who then is the Word who is God, who existed before creation, who created everything and is full of grace and truth?

[15 : 18] Well, let's not deliberate on that. Let's go to verse 15. John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, this was he of whom I said, he who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.

Verse 16, for the fullness of his grace, we have all received one blessing after another. Verse 17, for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

You see, Jesus doesn't just speak God's Word. He is the Word of God. He is the center, the high point of God's self-revelation.

It's where reality and the communication of ultimate reality come together in perfect alignment. And Jesus himself endorses the message of Psalm 119 verse 160 which says that all of God's Word eternal, all his righteous laws are true.

When Jesus himself says in Matthew chapter 5 verse 17, do not think that I've come to abolish the law and the prophets. I've not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappeared, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished.

[16 : 47] You see, the main reason that I wrestle with the Old Testament is because of the ringing endorsement that Jesus gives of it as the Word of God. And so, the sum of truth that I want St. Paul's to embrace is the 66 books of the Bible with Jesus as its center.

And that's what makes his core value called Christ-centered Bible saturation, so important for us. Jesus is the center of God's self-revelation.

And this is not just essential for us, it is essential for our world. The Bible is the way that God, the ultimate and all-important reality, reveals himself to us with authority and with clarity today.

And if God is more important than anything, then the Bible is more important than anything but God. And so, we need, as far as I'm concerned, to be saturated in it.

Not the minimalistic type of Christian that thinks, like I said before, a verse a day keeps the devil away. Saturated, drenched through with the Word of God.

[17 : 57] Truth, clarity of reality, because everything that we face is touched by the Bible. It is either touched directly because it's in the Bible or it's indirectly touched because the Bible shapes the attitudes and criteria in which we deal with it.

Now, I have no doubt that there are plenty of things that we need to know about in this world, but the Bible will be the sun in the solar system of all that we learn. It gives light, it gives perspective, it gives meaning.

Its truth needs to permeate everything. It is not one amongst many books, it will be the central book, the all-permeating book. The other truths are dark planets, the Bible is the light-giving sun.

All other truth claims will be read in the light of this book, all other things will be judged by this book. All things will find their meaning in the world view which is built by this book, which means that this book, the Bible must be known first and known better than anything else if you want a firm foundation in the way things actually are.

And if not, we are like a boat, a drift at sea, tossed about by every wave and storm and latest idea.

[19 : 24] my friends, this core value, this truth is so essential in a world that wants to invent its own truth and with all the consequences that go with that.

And let's be frank here, what I've said right now ain't so popular in our culture. And so how can this world come to know the truth and be joyfully confident in it?

How can they know ultimate reality and absolute truth? How can they know that the Bible is true? How can they come to know that Jesus is the centre of God's self-revelation?

And let me tell you, there's a temptation here for us to rely upon intellectual arguments that prove that God, that Jesus is God. and there are so many great arguments, so many external reasons as to why we would credit Jesus to be the Son of God.

But the external evidences are not decisive in and of themselves. I'm not saying you shouldn't use them, I'm saying they're not decisive in and of themselves.

[20 : 42] You see, the Pharisees didn't conclude that Jesus was God the Son when they saw enough evidence in the miracles of Jesus. They were literally metres away when Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb.

A bloke that they themselves had buried four days earlier. They knew he was dead. They were metres away. Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb. He walks out alive and what do they do?

They immediately plotted to kill Jesus. Instead of going God, we were wrong. They saw it.

The evidence was there. The external evidences were not and are not decisive in and of themselves. And there's only one thing that's decisive in people seeing truth.

Matthew 16 verses 13 to 17. When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say the son of man is?

[21 : 49] And they replied, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others Jeremiah, one of the prophets. But what about you, he asked, who do you say I am? And Simon Peter answered, you are the Christ, the son of the living God.

the conclusion that the Pharisees didn't come to when they saw Lazarus walking out of the tomb. What does Jesus say to him in verse 17? Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah for this was not revealed to you by man but by my father in heaven.

My father opened your eyes to see glory is what happened. When God the father opens the eyes of your heart you will see and you will know the facts are not decisive in and of themselves.

It's like me trying to explain to you that this chocolate is sweet and tastes pretty good.

And I could explain it to you by reading you some of the facts that the ingredients are sugar and cocoa mass and vegetable fats and milk fat and this contro in it and a bunch of other numbers and stuff like that and I can explain to you and say those things combined at the right sort of way produces something that tastes pretty good.

[23 : 17] You know the best way that I can help you understand the sweetness of chocolate is to actually get a piece out and to put it in your mouth rather than just mine and go what happens is I explain the facts to you and you go oh yeah yeah put it in your mouth and you go oh oh glory glory glory you see the sweetness of chocolate is self authenticatingly true if I take it out and I put it in your mouth and you don't get it I can't do anything for you I can't help you anymore the facts won't help you there's only one thing my friends that will set us out of here aflame it's all gone now the only thing that will send us out of here aflame with the glory of

God in the face of Christ in the word of God is the work of the Father helping you to taste that the Lord is good that's what this passage in 2 Corinthians 4 1 to 6 is so helpful for us so flick over there it's essential this passage therefore starting at verse 1 therefore since through God's mercy we have this ministry we do not lose heart rather we have renounced secret and shameful ways we do not use deception nor do we distort the word of God on the contrary by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God and even if our gospel is veiled it is veiled to those who are perishing the God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God for we do not preach ourselves but

Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake for God said verse 4 says that all human beings are blind the devil that is blind to glory of Christ the devil combines with our own corruption to cause blindness what are we blind to it's not the facts I want to emphasize this it's not the facts about Jesus because the devil gets many of the facts about Jesus right the devil knows that Jesus died he knows that he died for sin he knows that he rose again but he doesn't see any of that as glorious what we are blind to is the glory of the facts about

Jesus many people including those who have sat in church for years acknowledge the facts about Jesus but they don't actually treasure them they know about Jesus but they don't treasure him they know the Bible but they're not shaped by that they haven't seen the beauty of the facts the compelling worth of the facts they haven't seen verse for the glory of Christ what has to happen verse five sorry verse six for God who said let light shine our darkness made his light shine our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ that is what has happened to everyone here who has put their faith in Jesus Matthew 16 16 to 17 is what happened to you the father has revealed truth to you it's not because you're smart it's not because you're eloquent it's not because you're clever than anyone else it's because the father has taken your blindness and helped you to see that in itself is a reason for humble authenticity but we'll get to that in a couple of weeks now that doesn't mean that we don't do anything verse 4 says people are blind verse 6 says

God calls them to see and right in between those two is verse 5 which reveals the means by which God causes eyes to open so that they taste and they see truth glory for we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as your servants as Lord as King as Master as God as ultimate reality our job in this world uncertain and wary of any truth is to so portray the truth of the Bible and especially the center of it the center of it being the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God combined with the prayer that God would do his work convicting so that people might see Jesus and while we are reading the ingredients so to speak and explaining this sweetness of the facts God might unwrap a piece and put in people's mouth and they go

[28 : 59] Jesus I see him and if that happens suddenly all the defenses will fall down and Jesus will be irresistibly compelling as true and beautiful and glorious before I became a Christian I read the Bible back to front four times and I didn't see Jesus I heard one bloke preach one night and I just went oh it all makes sense and it's not because I read it through the fifth time it's because God just calls me to see my friends it is simply breathtaking that God who made everything controls everything as a person has actually spoken to us it is impossible for me to stand up here and actually overstate that very simple and basic truth

God has spoken to us we are not left without a knowledge of his will we are not left without wisdom we're not left without a well of knowledge that will never run dry we're not left without a revelation of the way of salvation the way of everlasting joy he has left us without a way to measure every single vital thing that we face in life including all of the alternative truth claims that are currently coming at us this is simply priceless in a world with little grasp or of truth or meaning or purpose or reality and I would suggest that if we could awaken to this truth in our life together as a church just imagine how we would live just imagine how we would navigate the complexity of life in this world the implications for our lives would be countless and it would be vital and so let me be absolutely frank with you

I am pretty much baffled by Christian leaders who preach and teach on things other than the Bible as if it is not relevant or interesting and I'm pretty much baffled by leaders of ministries who are too embarrassed to make the Bible front and centre in their ministry the church culture that I am to shape here at St Paul's is a church that's committed to Christ centred Bible saturation and the implications of what I said about reality and absolute truth in Jesus are so practical because if we believe that value and it's deeply inside of us it impacts our behaviour our attitudes and our actions it will mean things like that we value individual and corporate biblical reflection assessment of life and ministry that's we want to critique everything we do through the lens of scripture and consistently be critiquing everything we do through the lens of scripture we are committed to authority to

Bible teaching and preaching over reason and experience and tradition we are committed to the God centredness of all biblical truth we are committed to passing on to the next generation a biblically informed love for God we are committed to every believer taking responsibility to be spiritually and physically prepared to listen and obey as God's word is taught and every believer having a vital personal Bible study time where the Bible is read and meditated on and memorized and prayed over and obeyed and so my friends may God fill you with a strong love for truth a deep grasp of the Bible as the sum of all truth and a powerful vision for the glory of God in the face of Christ let's pray heavenly father on the six of this month 478 years ago

William Tyndall was strangled to death and his body was burnt so that we could have your word in our laps tonight and so may there be nothing trivial about the way we speak about the Bible not primarily because we owe a debt to Tyndall but because it is you speaking to us and so we ask that many many more than we could we could even ask for or imagine would come to revere you the God of the Bible and your word for St Paul's Lord we ask for an awakening to the truth in our lives and in this city for the glory of your name Amen