

What is Scripture?

A question came up recently in a class I was teaching. "Did Moses know he was writing Scripture"? It's a good question, and it forces us to consider the mindset of the men who actually composed those writings that we call Scripture; an important exercise in understanding proper context. (And you know my rule... *Bible Study is a thoughtful pursuit, and context is king.*) Additionally, it raises the good and thoughtful question, "What is Scripture?". So let's consider that question for a moment...

If we define the word "scripture" loosely, as any "*writing inspired by God, intended to be preserved as a guide, encouragement or instruction for God's people*", then included in "scripture" would be all the "*pre-canon*" writings of the church Fathers, such as Justin Martyr, Polycarp, Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome, etc... or the writings of all those being used by God in various cultures until those cultures had Bibles in their own written language... or perhaps the works of AW Tozer, the compiled devotions of CH Spurgeon, Augustine's City of God, Calvin's Institutes, Matthew Henry's Commentary, the Didache... etc...etc...etc...

If we consider that God has in fact inspired thousands of people to write thousands of things that He has intended to be saved, reproduced and helpful to His people, then perhaps even my sermon notes could be considered scripture! But if we define "Scripture" in the following way, then not so; and here is that way.

Of all the books, letters, writings, poems, songs, histories, narratives, instructive texts, etc (all of which genres exist in Scripture), which God has indeed inspired by His Spirit, God the Holy Spirit has decided to impress upon the Church of Jesus Christ, that 66 of those "books" are to be compiled and canonized into what we refer to as "*Holy Writ*"; the Canon of Scripture; that which is Eternal in the Heavens; that which will never pass away; God's Word. This compilation, this Canon we refer to as Scripture, and none else.

Rather than the loose, theologically inaccurate definition of scripture as "*writing inspired by God, intended to be preserved as a guide, encouragement or instruction for God's people*", Scripture is the Canon of 66 Books that we consider Eternal, for whatever reason and by whatever criteria God Himself has decided. Not anything else is Scripture, though it be inspired by God, used by God, preserved and even revered by man... Scripture alone is Scripture. On this hangs our very Sola... one of the five Solas of the Christian faith... Sola Scriptura, "Scripture Alone".

So, did Moses know that he was writing Scripture? Probably not. When we consider questions like these, it is important that we spend more than just a moment's thought on them, for they might not be as straight forward as they seem. Even a question as seemingly small as this one bears thoughtful consideration; for a loose, unbiblical, theologically inaccurate definition of Scripture, actually undermines a foundational tenet of our Christian faith.

Pastor