



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

Lesson 17.4 – The Doctrine of Holy Scriptures

The Sufficiency of the Scriptures

Our gracious God wants all people to be saved. That is why He sent His Son into the world to atone for the sins of all. That is why He sent the Holy Spirit to Jesus' disciples. That is why He revealed the plan of salvation to the world through the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Spirit does His work in the world through the means of grace: the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Nothing more is needed beyond what God has already given to us in the Scriptures.

In Jesus' parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus, the rich man in hell thought that having Lazarus come back from the dead and talk to his five living brothers would be the best way to save them from hell. But in the parable Abraham said to the rich man: "**They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them**" (Luke 16:29). When the rich man suggested that a man coming back from the dead would be more effective, Abraham replied: "**If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead**" (Luke 16:31).

What God has provided for us in the Old Testament and New Testament is sufficient for accomplishing what God wants to accomplish. Nothing needs to be changed; nothing needs to be added; nothing needs to be subtracted. We do not need additional Scriptures; we do not need additional visions or dreams; we do not need additional apostles or prophets to give us more than we already have. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "**From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work**" (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Notice that since Scripture is the Word of God, it is able to give us the wisdom we need for salvation. Since Scripture is the Word of God, it is profitable (useful) in many areas of our spiritual life. Since Scripture is the Word of God, those who have the Scriptures are thoroughly equipped for their Christian testimony and life. Having the Scriptures, we are complete and have no need for anything more.

As the last Gospel writer, John explained that much more could be said about Jesus than what is found in the Scriptures: "**There are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written**" (John 21:25). But John wrote what he did for this reason: "**These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name**" (John 20:31). What we have is sufficient for this purpose. Paul wrote: "**I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek**" (Romans 1:16).

From time to time God warned His people not to tamper with His revelation. Moses told the nation of Israel: "**You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you**" (Deuteronomy 4:2). Many years later the wise man Agur wrote: "**Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar**" (Proverbs 30:5-6).

The apostle Paul even pronounced a curse on anyone who dared to change the message he had been given, for he was "**an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the**

Father who raised Him from the dead)" (Galatians 1:1). These are Paul's solemn words: "Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ... If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9).

The last chapter of the last book in the New Testament gives us this very serious warning: **"If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life"** (Revelation 22:18-19).

What terrible damage has been done in the world by those who have ignored these solemn warnings! Through the years the Roman Catholic Church has added many teachings and has put them on the same level as Holy Scripture, even though many of these teachings clearly contradict what the Holy Spirit has written in the Scriptures. The Roman Catholic *Council of Trent* declared: "It receives and venerates with equal devotion and reverence all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament ... and also said traditions, both those pertaining to faith and those pertaining to morals, as dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Spirit and preserved by a continuous succession in the Catholic Church" (Fourth Session, First Decree). The Roman Catholic pope regards himself as an infallible teacher of the Church, and he has dared to declare as doctrines that must be believed the immaculate conception of Mary and her bodily assumption into heaven, although Holy Scripture does not even hint anywhere that such doctrines might be true.

Think of what damage has been done in the world by religious teachers such as Muhammad, who claimed that he received a revelation from the angel Gabriel, or Joseph Smith, who also claimed to be visited by an angel. In our age the charismatic movement has become strong throughout the world, and many of its leaders claim to be prophets who are receiving messages from God that deceive them and those who listen to them. It is necessary for us to repeat the words of Isaiah: **"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"** (Isaiah 8:20). Many are the cult leaders who claim a revelation from God for their lies, and many are those who are deceived by them.

Questions

1. What is meant by the sufficiency of the Scriptures?
2. What did the rich man in Jesus' parable think would be more effective than the Scriptures?
3. For what purpose are the Scriptures sufficient?
4. Why did the apostle John write his Gospel?
5. What kind of persons did Paul curse in Galatians, chapter 1?
6. What does the Roman Catholic Church teach about their traditions?
7. Where did Mohammed and Joseph Smith claim to get their messages?
8. Where did their messages actually come from?
9. In what ways is the charismatic movement a threat to true Christianity?
10. If there are charismatic groups in your locale, what do they claim?