

335 True or false?

Yes, I know I overstate things, but only to provoke you to question things you were taught. And, goaded by my overstated article,^[333] a friend referred to my treating the OT as ‘a mixture of truth and falsehood’, while ‘our Lord accepted and affirmed the Scriptures in their entirety.’ I asked last time^[334] if you wanted to discuss that statement. So, is now a good time?

Having lost my faith totally, I have spent seven years checking out what I was taught, on which I had based my faith. I used to think that the Bible, end to end, was inspired; but now I **know** in my heart that it was **all** inspired by God – wonderfully so! How else could a selection of diverse authors from different walks of life, over a huge span of time, writing in different genres, tell such a unified story about God, about humans, and about how we can live together in love. Amazing!

Did you see how I slipped in there the **purpose** for which I think the Bible was inspired? Misunderstand the purpose of a book (or books) and you can get things very wrong.^[334]

In my view, the Bible was not given to us as a specification of what is true and what is false. Are you shocked by that? Please don’t be; I do still believe there’s such a thing as falsehood and such a thing as evil, and that we need to fight against them.

In an excellent short course by run Rev Alex Irving, about the creeds, he explained how they were provided as a defence against the worst falsenesses of misunderstanding the ***nature of God and of what Jesus achieved on the cross.***

That bit in bold, to me, is the diamond that I have begun to appreciate more and more these past few years, but if you look, you’ll see that none of the creeds specify ***how*** Jesus’ death atoned for our sins, simply ***that*** our sin is removed by his death.

Sadly, the glorious and varied facets of that diamond have become, in the past few hundred years, the subject of ‘atonement wars’: theologians have argued over the *exact mechanism*. And the conservative end of the Evangelical movement has only one mechanism that God uses to take away sin. (My friend did say a few years ago that penal substitution is ‘pastorally unhelpful for some people’.)

Worse still, that single mechanism has become ‘the gospel’, which Evangelicals preach repeatedly. In recent articles, I have pointed to Tom Wright’s view of what the gospel really is, as preached by the early church.

As Jesus explained to that couple on the Emmaus road, the purpose of the Scriptures was to point to him – Jesus fulfilled those inspired Scriptures. If you study the OT with Jesus as your Bible study leader, you’ll see just how inspired – and inspiring – the OT actually is.

How I praise God for the richness of the Old Testament!

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