

**Sovereign Grace Church**  
**“Whence Our Authority?” outline**  
October 15, 2017

**Daniel 7: 1-14; Matthew 24: 18b-20**

*This morning we will begin a short series on themes related to the Reformation. The Reformation may have begun as a simple reform movement within the Catholic Church. But it resulted in the second major split within Christendom. One of the central concerns during this time was who or what speaks with legitimate authority. The Protestant element asserted that Scripture alone was the final authority and that, although church councils and creeds were also authoritative, their authority was checked by that of Scripture. The Roman Catholic worry here was that without the Church's authoritative interpretation of Scripture, Scriptural authority would be a moot point.*

*This morning we will consider the relationship between our recognition of the Bible as our supreme authority in faith & practice with the difficulties our need to interpret the Bible presents to that recognition.*

**1. The perceived problem of Private Interpretation II Tim 3: 16; Ac 17:11**

**Objection 1: This opens the door to many competing interpretations of Scripture?**

*“To check unbridled spirits it [the council] decrees that no one, relying on his own judgment shall, in matters of faith & morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, distorting the Holy Scriptures in accordance with his own conceptions, presume to interpret them contrary to that sense which holy mother Church, to whom it belongs to judge of their true sense & interpretation, has held or holds, or even contrary to the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, even though such interpretations should never at any time be published.” **Council of Trent***

**Objection 2: Isn't for me to interpret Scripture to place myself above the Scripture?**

**Ans: Correct interpretation is not a matter of personal opinion. It is a matter of applying God's standards of interpretation correctly.**

**PT Luther's doctrine of private interpretation did NOT convey freedom to interpret according to my desires. Rather a Responsibility to interpret Correctly!**

2. What are the objective canons of Correct Interpretation?  
Universally recognized canons of interpretation: *logic; grammar & history*

**Note:** There is a subjective element in interpretation in that WE are the ones wielding these objective canons! True of persons & institutions. Prov 11: 14

3. The Problem of the rejection of Revelational Authority Today

Post-Modernism teaches that there is no universal truth. Our interpretations cannot escape the interpreter! Thus, the interpreter in power dictates the interpretation!

**Challenge:** Our Current Crisis

The Problem of Suppression Romans 1: 18b-20; 2: 14-15

The Bible and the Spirit? or the Bible vs. the Spirit? II Cor. 3: 2-3

### Questions for Conversation and Reflection

1. How do you make moral decisions? Upon what authority do you rely? To what authority do you appeal when others ask your moral advice? Is it possible for the Christian to set aside God's law in giving moral advice?
2. If the objective standards of correct interpretation are given us by natural revelation, does this make natural revelation more authoritative than the Scriptures (special revelation)? What is the difference between natural and special revelation? Are they both inerrant? Must they both be interpreted? How are they related? Can one provide correction to a wrong interpretation of the other?
3. The Reformation held forth the Bible as the final authority in discerning the contradicting claims of lesser authorities. This of course presumes that the Bible is in fact the Word of God. Given that other contradictory texts have made the same claim (Koran, Book of Mormon) how do we know that the Bible's claim is true and the others are not? Are there other sources of truth apart from Scripture? If so, how are they related to Scripture? Should these questions be suppressed in the interest of truth? Can they be?