

## Intro

Review – most recent lessons:

### *Jesus and Trustworthiness*

“What Jesus said about the Old Testament demonstrates what He believed about it, and what Jesus believed about the Old Testament has to matter to believers.”<sup>1</sup>

- Demonstrating Jesus’ confidence in the trustworthiness of God’s words

Today:

### Trusting God’s Word’s about the Past

Psalm 19.7ff. celebrates God’s words to his people, using several synonyms in the text.

- law
- testimony
- precepts
- commandment
- judgements

These words and others in Ps 119 refer to God’s word. We tend to ignore the distinctions between the terms.

“The multiplicity of synonyms is not just for poetic variety ... all of them ‘contribute ... to our total understanding of what Scripture is and how it functions.’ [Kidner, 417.]” [115]

**Testimonies:** “A testimony is a personal attestation of what an eyewitness affirms to be so.” [115]

Man’s theories about the past often contradict what God said about the past (God’s testimony). God has one advantage over man: God was there.

Man is *simple* concerning the past — inexperienced.

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<sup>1</sup> Layton Talbert, *The Trustworthiness of God’s Words: Why the Reliability of Every Word from God Matters* (Geanies House, UK: Christian Focus, 2022), 85 (All other quotations will be noted merely by a page number [in brackets]).

Pr 21.30 There is no wisdom and no understanding And no counsel against the LORD.

“Are you willing to stake your reputation on the trustworthiness of a testimony from God, even when it pits you against the opinions of the wise in this world?” [116]

- Not simply blind faith (*fideism* — “the view that objects of religious belief should be accepted simply by faith regardless of reason or evidence.
- We mean that we employ the Bible to help us interpret evidence from other sources, presupposing that the evidence cannot contradict the Bible.
- Consequently, any interpretation that contradicts the Bible cannot be correct.

For example: Ps 19.1-6 says that creation itself is a testimony of God’s handiwork. This lesson will explore God’s testimony about creation.

## I. Creation: God’s first testimony to the trustworthiness of His words

### A. The Ten Words: “And God said...” (Gen 1)

#### 1. God speaks, and it was so (God testifies)

Gen 1.3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29

“The Bible’s first chapter introduces us to a God who speaks, and whose words dictate and define reality.” [117]

#### 2. The consequences of God’s speech

- Let there be light, and there was light (1.3)
- Let there be ... God made/created ... (1.7, 21, 27)
- God said ... and it was so ... (1.7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30) →  
effortlessness

#### 3. Implications from the testimony of Genesis 1

- The immense power of God: God’s ability
- The certainty of God’s words

1) “God is certain to do everything He says” [117]

## 2) Establishes trustworthiness — God’s reliability

“God Himself made the Bible’s first chapter an argument for trusting the reliability of God’s words.”  
[118]

### B. A Meditation on the ten words: Psalm 33.6-9

1. The thoughts of the psalm bracket a call to worship with the testimony of creation (6, 9)
  - a. Lit. “He spoke and it was” (9)
  - b. The psalm emphasizes the “animating energy of God’s speech” (6-7) [118]
2. The words of creation call for worship (8)

#### Considerations on the creative words:

1. The evidence of creation (*i.e.*, the science) can only find true explanation by the presupposition of a creator
2. Our emphasis today is not on the evidence, but the testimony: God’s speech always accomplishes its purpose

## II. The Fall: the first challenge to the trustworthiness of God’s words

- ### A. God spoke in creation, and it was good; God spoke also with authority, and man was responsible (Gen 2.16-17)

“The first challenge to the trustworthiness of God’s words took place in the immaculate environment of Eden ... at its marrow the Fall was a decision not to trust God’s words.” [119]

- Lack of trust comes from a heart decision, not the cynical dissatisfaction flowing from frustration with a broken environment. In other words, mistrust is not the product of the question of evil — “Why is there death, sin, trouble, toil in the world?”

- ### B. The serpent questioned the content of God’s words: raising doubt (Gen 3.1)

1. We can only know God from what God says
2. Doubt in God springs from doubting God’s words

- a. Doubt assumes unreasonableness in what God said
  - b. Doubt presumes that God's word lacks intellectual dignity (the account of creation for example)
  - c. Doubt stirs against authority, resenting limitations on human freedom
- C. The serpent contradicted the content of God's words: inciting distrust (Gen 3.4)
1. Kidner: "The first doctrine to be denied is judgement." [Genesis, 68]
  2. Note: the first doctrine to be denied was not creation or the existence of God
  3. "The first doctrine to be denied was the trustworthiness of God's words." [120]
- D. The serpent motivated deepening mistrust by maligning the motives of God (Gen 3.5)
1. The serpent doesn't deny that the command came from God
  2. Rather, he questions the motive behind the command  
(Essentially, "God is afraid you will become his equal.")
  3. It is a question of interpretation, a "hermeneutic of suspicion"
  4. Since the fall, men are suspicious of God's words
- E. Notice the subtlety of suspicion
1. The serpent deceived Adam and Eve, which Eve acknowledges (13)
  2. Yet the serpent's statement "you will be like God, knowing good and evil" was *technically true* (22)  
  
"The deception lay in Satan's implication that this would be a good thing, and a good means of attaining it. Satan omits the details of the bargain and what it will cost; he tells them what they will gain, but not what they will lose in the process. That's how temptation usually approaches us."  
[121]

## F. Our challenge: did Adam and Eve die, or did they not?

1. Adam, according to the Bible, lived for nine centuries (Gen 5.5)
  - a. God assured Adam that death was the consequence of defying his command (Gen 2.16-17)
  - b. Was God wrong? Did God change his mind?
2. Scripture interprets Scripture: we gain a deeper understanding of the death God promised
  - a. The truth is, the first thing that died was spiritual life (Eph 2.1, 5; Col 2.13)
  - b. Physical death followed, a direct consequence of the fall, which affects every man (Rm 5.12, 1 Co 15.22)
3. Some object: “How could Adam and Eve have understood this theology of death? First spiritual death, then physical death”
  - a. A counter objection: “How could they understand death in any sense at all?”
  - b. They had *never seen any death* (Rm 5.12) — death of any creature is a consequence of the fall (Rm 8.19-22)

“To say and not do is human, not divine (Num 23.19). For God to say and not do would be for God to life; and that’s something he is incapable of doing (Titus 1.2).” [122]