



**MOSAIC CHURCH**

**On Understanding  
the Holy Scriptures**

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*Affirmed on April 24, 2023*

*Formatted to Current on May 15, 2023*

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# INTRODUCTION

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There are many different approaches an individual can take when it comes to interpreting the Bible on any given topic or theme. Because the Bible was not only written in a vastly different context than our own but also guided by the Holy Spirit through the hands of a diversity of writers across centuries, it can sometimes be easy to notice verses that seem at odds with one another and each of us as the reader ending up in greater confusion than when we started. In addition, we each can find passages within the Bible that we are extremely grateful for their inclusion or others that, because they either oppose our way of thinking or are simply confusing, we would prefer had been left out. This leaves two questions we must wrestle with: 1) In what ways are the Scriptures sufficient? 2) How do we interpret and understand the Bible?

# SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

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The Bible offers us a seeming paradox when it comes to its sufficiency. We discover that the Scriptures are sufficient to speak into every conceivable scenario of life specifically because they do not give every detail or comment on every conceivable scenario of life.

The Bible begins with a Being whose essence radiates out in creating, forming, and filling a universe intended to reflect his divine character. At the pinnacle of the created order, God places humankind to rule and carry out this desire, for His divine character to be spread throughout the world as these image bearers are multiplied across the Earth. However, things go wrong when the humans God created to rule with Him instead turn to rebel against Him and His design, spreading death and destruction rather than life and beauty. And yet, in spite of this drastic turn in the plot, God's desire and plan for humanity and all of creation remains the same: spread God's life, light, and transforming love.

When the biblical narrative begins to incorporate commands, we find that they are examples of how, in a specific context, God's people are to live out his character toward him and one another. In our modern world we have a phrase to describe a similar concept, case law, which are judgments based on the underlying principles of precedent examples. Although every instruction in Scripture remains relevant, not all of them continue or have continued to be applicable in the same way.

It's important to remember that the point of the command was never limited to the command itself. God's heart and aim was always for His love to be made manifest in the lives of his people and expand out into the world. The brilliance of God's intent in this is that even commands that seem strange, outdated, and irrelevant continue to be useful because at one time, in a given context, that law represented a way to live out the love of God. Each instruction demonstrates an example we can explore to discover a facet of the heart of God which we can then incorporate in our own context.

This all may sound a bit new and in turn, scary. However, this is actually a proven and effective way of understanding the Bible. This is the way the prophets of Israel used the Scriptures. This is the way the Jewish Rabbis in the first century interacted with the Scriptures. This is even the way Jesus demonstrated for us how to see and utilize the Scriptures. Finally, this is the way that the Apostles and the early church proclaimed and demonstrated the ethics of the Scriptures.

# INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE

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Understanding the sufficiency of Scripture is core to what it means to follow Jesus and obey his commands. But if this were the only principle that we understood about the Bible we could craft our own interpretations of the Scriptures that do not match what is true and instead match our preconceived beliefs or desires. Therefore, when we open up our Bibles we need to look for underlying truth that is being conveyed and then ensure that this truth is in line with the full canon of what the Bible reveals to us.

When we interpret through the lens of the full counsel of Scripture, we are utilizing a biblical interpretive approach that looks at the entirety of the Bible on any given topic, truth, or theme and seeing the fullness of what God has said to humans through the Scriptures on the topic. It is worth noting that while utilizing this biblical approach often leads to conclusions that are agreed upon as core beliefs in the church, some lead biblical and Spirit-filled people to differing conclusions in the categories of distinctive and open-handed beliefs. Therefore, this approach should, like all things biblically-rooted, lead us to great humility.

This method of interpretation may be more painstaking than many other methods that do not take into account context, genre, or cross referencing against the rest of the Bible. And yet, we can trust that it is always worth the effort.

The Bible was written to be consulted with itself. We are invited to see that the Bible is an extension of God's character because on every page we have the proven and faithful voice of the living God. If we truly believe God does not contradict Himself and the Scriptures are God's voice to humanity, then we must also believe the Scriptures will never contradict itself, even when on face value it seems to be doing exactly that. However, it is important to do the hard work to discover and wrestle with the Scriptures and discover with the aid of the Holy Spirit how God's words bring clarity out of what seems confusing.

An approach that has often been used to minimize confusion apart from this type of labored wrestling is referred to as proof texting, a method where you pull passages from throughout Scripture with little concern for the context, literary genre, etc. This is often used to justify an already existing position or by providing a lens for confirmation bias. Further, proof texting often leads to crumbled beliefs when attention is brought to seemingly contradictory passages, which can lead to disillusionment and doubt for many who hold tight to beliefs rooted in this approach. Hence, most serious Bible teachers throughout the centuries and the historic global Church have rejected this practice.

Instead, we believe consulting the full counsel of Scripture provides us the opportunity to see past our preconceived biases and instead witness the fullness of what God is saying on a topic. Ultimately, as followers of Jesus we are called to submit all of our preconceived beliefs and desires to Him, praying that our hearts and minds would be open to wherever He would guide us through His Word.

## IN PRACTICE

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If you read the majority of our doctrine statements, including our Core Beliefs, you will notice that we have not included specific scripture references to back up each point. We realize this intentional choice can be a bit confusing, but our desire is to visibly reject the unhelpful tool of proof texting and instead show how each point is consistently displayed through the full counsel of Scripture.

When the elders of Mosaic Church write each statement, our goal and hope is not to begin with our individual or collective preexisting beliefs and justify them scripturally. Instead, we prayerfully and by the leading of the Spirit set out on each topic, seeking to understand the full counsel of Scripture on the topic with an understanding of the Bible's sufficiency. After this, we consult biblical commentaries, research, and experts with a diversity of thoughts and experiences. Only after all this do we write out any statement that we desire will be utilized for the purpose of shepherding the body of Mosaic Church toward life, light, and freedom. Therefore, what might seem like a lack of Scripture references is not meant to elevate our own thoughts on any topic, but instead elevate the full counsel of Scripture and God's heart for humanity on any and every topic.

Our hope is that every follower of Jesus who calls Mosaic home (as well as Christians throughout the Global Church) would learn to study the Scriptures well and wisely by understanding and trusting in its sufficiency and consulting its full counsel. This means learning to engage with the Scriptures by looking for underlying and overarching principles and learning to interpret the Bible against itself. And in doing so, we would grow together in our discipleship with Jesus and not just as a collection of students of the Bible, although that will assuredly be a beautiful side benefit. Therefore, each of us must focus on cultivating an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus in which our hearts grow to discover more of God and His immeasurable love for His kids and His world through His Word.