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## Are Christians Who Study and Adhere to the Truths Revealed in the Bible Engaging in Bibliolatry?

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### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to respond to someone who says adhering to biblical inerrancy, studying Scripture, seeking to obey the Word, and adhering to its core truths is “bibliolatry” and how to explain the differences in the Gospel accounts to young children.

\* What would you say to someone who thinks adhering to biblical inerrancy, studying Scripture, seeking to obey the Word, and adhering to its core truths is “bibliolatry”?

\* What suggestions or perspective can you give for helping me explain the differences in the Gospel accounts to my young sons?

### Transcript

[Music] This is the #STRask podcast with Amy Hall and Greg Cogle. Welcome. Welcome to you, Amy.

All right. Greg, today I have a few questions that are all Bible related. Okay.

So the first one comes from Andrew. What do you say to someone who thinks adhering to biblical and narrancy, studying Scripture, seeking to obey the Word, and adhering to core truths is considered bibliology? Well, I've heard this kind of challenge a lot. Okay.

I'm just trying to think of a counter. This is foolishness to say this, first of all. Okay.

But I'm wondering if there's a metaphor or an illustration right here. So the person says, what do you think? So the person says, your view of the Bible is bibliology. Well, I'm glad you like it.

Well, I don't like it. I think it's wrong. Oh, I thought you think it's great.

No, it's wrong. Well, that's the way I take it. Well, wait a minute, you're misrepresenting my view.

Really? So do you want me to take your view seriously? Is that view that my reading of the Bible is bibliology? Is that your view? That's not somebody else's view, right? You're giving me your view and you want me to take that seriously as your own view. Well, I, yes, of course I want you to get, well, I take that as personality because see, now I'm taking your words at face value and giving the value to them that you want me to give you. But you see, that's just another type of idolatry.

I'm just going to make your words mean whatever you, whatever I want them to mean. Okay. Now maybe that was a little bit of a shabby illustration, but I think you kind of get the point.

When we go to the Bible, what we, the Bible, let me back up, a person who claims that a high view of scripture is bibliology is genuinely some kind of Christian self identifies as a Christian and they are faulting you for a form of idolatry. What's wrong with ideology? Here's another thing coming to mind. What's wrong with idolatry? Well, idolatry is wrong.

Where does it say? Where did you get that idea? It's in the Bible. Really? Where? In the 10 commandments? You mean I should obey the 10 commandments? Of course, that's idolatry. So there's a certain sense this is self refuting, okay? Because what they want is the concern about idolatry to be a moral standard because it comes from a proper source, God's word, but then they don't want you using God's word to do other things that probably interfere with their life that they don't want God to be messing with and they're going to disqualify it as bivalality or bibliology.

All right. We go to the text because we are convinced for a number of reasons that this is God speaking. Okay? We are simply taking it as his words.

So the locus of authority is God. That's why it says God's word and why I've often taught that if you distort God's word and take it out of context and have it mean something, try to make it mean something that God did not intend. It is no longer God's word.

It's your word. All right. And so we are trying to figure out what God Himself wants because God is the one that is to be honored and obeyed.

Okay? If people are taking this approach are guilty of bibliology, then that's true of every writer of the New Testament. What is bibliology? Maybe back to the very first question, Colombo. What exactly is bibliology? Ask that question and get them.

That's like treating the Bible as an idol. All right. Well, that's already attained in the word.

So you haven't defined it for me. In what sense am I treating a book like an idol? You are worshiping the book? No, I'm not worshiping it. I'm taking the words seriously.

How was taking the word seriously, idolatry? Whose words would you say these are to this critic? Whose words would you say these are? If they're God's words, then should I

take what God says seriously? How is that idolatry when it is God Himself, not an idol that I am concerned with? Now, I've just given some different questions to try to get to the heart of the matter. And the heart of the matter is this is nonsense. This is a foolish objection that is covering for something else.

This is my judgment. This is my assessment of heard these things time and time and time again. Even to say it's taking the Bible with a high view, the way it was described in the question is bibliology.

There's got to be something wrong with idolatry, which they're claiming you're committing, and you only get something wrong with idolatry from a high view of the Bible. So this is self-refuting at its base. But there's something else going on here.

These kinds of claims don't come up in general in Christian circles where classical Christianity is upheld as a theological and moral standard. This comes up in other circles where people don't like what the Bible says. And it generally touches on some moral issue.

And so when you cite the Bible, then they accuse you of abusing the Bible as an idol. What's the alternative? Maybe that's another question that could be asked. What's the alternative? Well, we don't take it as an idol.

Then how do we know what God wants? Should we obey God? There's another question. Well, that yes, but I presume someone who identifies as a Christian is going to say, "Yes, we should obey God, but this book doesn't give us everything that God says or everything in the book isn't what God says." So now they're questioning the authority of the book. Okay, that's another issue.

Is this God's word or not? If it's not God's word, that's a low view of Scripture, then I don't know what you're going to follow for God. Your feelings? If it is God's word, well, then it's God's word. It's not an idol to take God at His word.

This just happens to be in book form. What if God just spoke these words directly to us because He was standing in front of us? It would be no less or more authoritative. It's the same thing.

It's just a different token. The token is the representation of the original type. The type is God.

Is God's intentions, desires, propositions, whatever? If He says them to us speaking, the token is in the speech. If He has somebody write them down, the token is in the book, but nevertheless, the type is the same. And so we're just trying to obey and take seriously the original thing coming from God.

What is the problem with that? One illustration I could give to somebody who said this is,

well, if God appeared to me, He came and stood before me, metaphorically speaking, of course. And He told me something, and I took it seriously. Is that idolatry? It's obviously not idolatry.

It's obviously not. If you are taking God's word seriously, you are not being a dollar-tress. Now, if we're wrong about the Bible being God's word, then yes, it is idolatry.

If it's not actually God's word and we're taking it as a greater authority than God, which I don't even know how he would know that was the case, because the only way we know who God is and what He wants is from His revelation. But let's just say this is not truly from God. Then yes, we are following false things about God.

We are worshiping a false God. Even if we're not worshiping the Bible, we're worshiping a false God. If we believe false things about Him and we're not worshiping the true God.

If the book were an object of veneration, if I had my Bible sitting here and I'm bowing down to my Bible and I'm worshiping, the book itself, the object was the object of my veneration, then they might have a case, but that's not what we're doing. Right. But if the Bible is not God's word, then we are worshiping a false God, even if we're not worshiping our Bible.

The problem there is not a Dollar Tree. It means that the God that we are worshiping is not the true God. So the real problem here is whether or not the Bible is God's word.

That's the whole question. That is where you need to take this discussion. If the Bible is God's word, then we should take it seriously.

If it's just like we would take God seriously if He spoke audibly to us. If it's not God's word, then we shouldn't take it seriously. So I think that's where you need to take this discussion.

Now the irony is if you reject God's revealed word in order to follow what you think is right, now you really are being idolatrous. Idolatry of self. Yes.

So that's the whole irony of this because they are rejecting the objective word that God has given us in favor of their own ideas. And how is that not wrong? I mean, that's something else you could ask. Well, how if you're rejecting God's revelation, how is that not wrong? And again, you're back to the question, is it God's revelation? And so I think that's where you need to take this.

Okay, Greg, here's another question from Stephanie. My husband and I have been reading through the Gospels with our boys age five and seven. They are paying attention and noticing lots of details.

What suggestions or perspective can you give for helping explain the differences in the

accounts? For example, whether the fig tree shriveled immediately or after he cleared the temple? Well, this is a little difficult with younger kids because there are peculiarities to ancient accounts of things that are not characteristic of more modern accounts. So to have a time gap, I'm thinking specifically of that illustration, biblical illustration she mentioned, to have a time gap in an account of something is not characteristic of the way we write. Okay, but it is characteristic of their writing there.

What you have in the one account, the abbreviated account, you have the cursing, and then you have the people responding to the cursing, which fig tree withered right away. But when you look at the other account, you realize between those two verses, there are a bunch of other things that happen. Now the fig tree withered right away, but they weren't taking note of it until they came back.

Okay, and so that journey in between is simply not recorded. So it is characteristic of our interactions with others, and we're telling stories and stuff. And this is what I think the voice would understand, is that there that we often will leave chunks of information out because we're trying to put together different points that we're trying to emphasize.

So when the boys are going swimming and have this big thing in the pool that was a lot of fun, you don't mention that you had hot dogs between the time you got there and the time you had the fun in the pool. Okay, that might be left out because the hot dogs are not relevant to the idea of going to the pool and playing this game. Okay, but there's a big chunk that's left out.

Now another brother who's explaining that, who really likes hot dogs, might say, we got there, we ate a bunch of hot dogs, and then we played this game. Okay, so the difference in the accounts is that one leaves out a section that was important for his purposes, but in the case of the other, it wasn't relevant, so they collapsed the two together, okay, as if one happened right after the other. All we have to be aware of is that these texts are not declaring that they happened right together.

They were subsequent to each other, but we know they weren't right together because another text indicates what happens in between. And so when we have reason not to take them exactly together like this competing text, then we realize there's information that's been left out. The writer of the truncated one was trying to draw the most attention to the cursing and the response of the disciples, and so he puts them together.

And this is not unusual for ancient texts. Things in ancient texts are not necessarily in consecutive order. They're topically arranged.

And because the writers were trying to make particular points with these biographical pieces of information or these biographical sketches about Jesus, and so they're assembling them somewhat thematically and leaving out things that are not relevant. If you go to Mark chapter five, you have a Gatorine-Demoniac, and I think in Mark, you only

have one demoniac, but you have a parallel passage. It turns out there's two.

Mark is just talking about the one. The other passage includes both of them, also not unusual, even in modern parlance to talk like that. It's not a contradiction.

It's just that one is a truncated or shortened account, and Mark is moving pretty fast. He's got 16 chapters to the gospel. He's not given lots of stuff.

He's moving ahead. And so this is why he wouldn't want to get into details about both rather than one. I'm speculating with that's my assumption.

But take comfort in the realization that writings from the ancient Near East followed different standards to be considered accurate and truthful in what they communicated, different standards than what we have today. So it's an achronistic. It's a reading back into the past, something from the present, to demand a certain manner of communication from people who aren't used to that, and then somehow disqualify that as being inaccurate or unsound.

And I think the key thing you said, Greg, is that sometimes there's information that you don't have that brings the two together. So one thing I would say is that anything that you're going to find in the Bible has been thought about. We've had 2000 years to think about it.

People have theories about different things. They offer different solutions. So if you come across something, you don't know how to reconcile, and maybe even you read the explanations and you don't fully buy any of them.

I always think of something that JP Morland wrote about an erancy one time. And he was talking about how in science, when they look at everything, they create these theories, they figure out how things work, but then there'll be these anomalies, but they don't throw away the theory because of the anomaly. So let's say, you know, we believe in an erancy.

We believe that God's word is true and that all of the Bible is his revealed word. And maybe there's something I can't explain. I shouldn't throw away an erancy because an erancy is based on the idea not from adding up every true statement, but from the idea that the Bible is the word of God.

That's what that is based on. It's the nature of the Bible that leads to our view of it as being an errant. So if there's something I can't explain, I assume there's something I'm missing in this situation.

And many of those things that were conundrums before turned out to be understandable. I remember Jay Warner Wallace of two illustrations. One is that when blood and water came out of Jesus' side when he was speared on the cross for hundreds

and hundreds of years, nobody understood what that meant.

They tried to metaphorize it and stuff like that until a modern medicine gave the appropriate explanation for that. No, it makes perfect sense. So he was actually seeing something that actually happened, the author who wrote that, but he didn't know that what it meant, that it was physiological.

And people, I should say, he wrote what he saw, and others reading it could make sense of it. They didn't realize it was merely physiological. They tried upon some deeper meaning in it.

And now we find out that it's completely physiological. Then there was another illustration I was going to give from Jim. Now I'm trying to remember what it was.

The point you were making a few moments ago was that, oh, I remember. So in the Gospels, you have one of the Gospels where Jesus is being struck. This is during his trial in that whole episode.

And he is being struck. And then it says, prophesy, who struck you? Oh, wait a minute. I'm looking right at you.

I can see who struck me. Why is that significant? When you read a parallel account in the other Gospels, you get a detail that wasn't included in this one. And that is that Jesus was blindfolded.

So when you realize when you take these together, Jesus was blindfolded. And then he struck. And then he says, prophesy, who hit you, that makes sense.

But you have to get the detail from the other Gospels. Okay. And this kind of shows how they all fit together in a powerful fashion.

But it does, if you're just reading one, wait a minute, that's kind of goofy. It's the other one that provides the detail. I think I'm just looking up on our website now, because I remember Tim did a series on answering Gospels, G-O-S-P-T-A-C-L-E-S.

And he had a post on how to look at supposed contradictions, alleged contradictions, and kind of ways to think about that. So that's something you could look up on our website. I think he gives more of these guidelines again, if you want to review and think about it.

And again, people have thought about all of these things before. So make sure they know that they don't have to hide from these things. They don't have to run in fear when they see something that they think is a contradiction.

Encourage them to say, hey, let's go look it up. Let's go see what people say about this. And if you show that you're not afraid of this, they'll pick up on that.

Whereas if you're trying to hide it, they'll pick up on that too. So I recommend you look at that post and help your kids understand that we can trust that the Bible is God's word because of the nature of what it is. Well, thank you for your questions.

We're out of time, Greg. Here we go. We love hearing from you.

Send us your questions on Twitter with the hashtag #STRSQ or through our website from the hashtag #STRSQ podcast page. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cocle for Stand to Reason.

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