

## 178 Part 2: Clearing the Clutter

In this short series of Weekly Reflections about our effective use of the Bible, we considered last time about the Bible being a "canon", that wholly-reliable "straight-edge" given to us by the Lord for our guidance and blessing. We thus come to the Bible with reverence, prayerfully dependent upon the Holy Spirit's leading as to how to handle the many issues before us today alongside the straight edge of God's Word. Very often we will find that that simple, Christ-used response, "It is written ...", gives us all the Spirit's leading that we need.

But today, in whichever country we may be living in, for us to settle any discussion with not-yet-Christians by our saying the words, "It is written ..." is unlikely to count for very much! For as we all know, the Bible has been wilfully excluded from public life for many years, so the notion that what it says should even be remarked upon, let alone should "carry the day", is treated as laughable. A likely response to our words, "The Bible says ..." will be "So what? - why should anyone take the Bible seriously today?".

That is a fair question, and brings us on to the need for us to "clear the clutter" first. By that we mean our demonstrating that the Bible stands wholly apart from all other claimed "holy books", and hence, for individuals and societies to ignore it is pure folly. Before we can meaningfully refer to the straight-edge of Scripture, we have to establish that the Bible, uniquely, contains features which establish beyond doubt its divine, rather than human, authorship. In this way we can expose the false reasons which people rely upon to reject the Bible, and get to work on the real issues, taking our lead from the Bible, now seen to be truly "God's Word". (To take you further regarding these "many infallible proofs", please see [www.fsmins.org](http://www.fsmins.org)).

Jesus lived physically on earth in a time when the Scriptures were prominent, so none of this preliminary "clearing of the clutter" was necessary. When Jesus spoke with the woman at the well (John 4), she already knew the Scriptures herself, so both she and Jesus were on the same wavelength - with wonderful consequences.

Later on Paul could do the same in the Jewish synagogue of any new city he reached. Because the Scriptures were already known there, his "It is written" message concerning the Messiah and the Gospel made sense to his hearers, whether or not they accepted his words. But after preaching the Gospel to his fellow-Jews he had to use a different approach among the Gentiles, whose knowledge of the Scriptures was far more akin to our own day - ignorance and apathy. So in Athens for example (Acts 17.16ff), he made no mention of the

Scriptures at all, starting instead with God being the "unknown God" the Creator, before speaking of a day of judgement for all by a man whom God raised from the dead (v 31).

Now our need as Christians today - first to clear "the clutter" in people's minds, and then to speak of the Biblical Gospel - remains vital. A topical example in Britain is the recent election of a Muslim, Mr Sadiq Khan, as Mayor of London. In his acceptance speech, Mr Khan said that his victory over his rival, who had raised questions over some of the people Mr Khan associates with, showed that "hope has overcome fear, and unity has triumphed over diversity". Now such remarks are a familiar Muslim message, promoting the idea that we are all one big happy family, that any differences between Judaism, Christianity and Islam are wholly trivial, and that even to question the Muslim Faith is divisive and insulting. Is such a message really true? Is the Koran really on a par with the Holy Bible? Is a Muslim-shaped society really identical to a Christian-shaped society? Clearly the answers to such questions are No. Such talk actually misleads, adding to the "clutter" in people's minds that "all religions are the same" - clutter we have to remove before the straight-edge of the Holy Bible can be brought to bear.

The fact is, in essence, all religions ARE the same - bar one! - "you get to heaven by your own goodness". Only the Holy Bible, God's Word to the human race and uniquely supported by incontrovertible credentials, gives us the truth: we can never "get there" by our own goodness, but Almighty God has enabled us to do so by the gift of His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. All that is left for us to do is accept and follow Him - a simple, clear message devoid of any clutter, and wholly in line with that beautiful straight-edge of Scripture, "It is written ...".