

Three ways in which Christians believe that the Bible communicates God's authority

Read through this sheet and highlight the three most important points in each box.

Through the law and the covenants

One of the themes of the Old Testament is that God promised to be in a relationship with the Israelites; and that the Israelites promised to honour God in their lives and worship. In the Bible, this lasting promise is called a 'covenant'.

For the Israelites, part of honouring God was to follow his laws, including those which he gave to Moses as the Ten Commandments.

The law had over 600 commandments in total. In Psalm 119, the writer tells us about how important the law is to him:

Oh, How I love your law!
It is my meditation all day long.
Your commandment makes me wiser than
my enemies,
for it is always with me.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to
my path.
I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.

Psalm 119 verses 97-98 and 105-106 (NRSV)

Through the prophets

God's authority is also made known in the Old Testament through the prophets, people who spoke God's word into the situations the Israelites found themselves in. The prophets would tell people to live better lives, reinforce the teachings of the law and call them to realise that true authority was not found in kings or other gods, but only in the God 'I Am'. The prophet would say what was wrong with the existing world and then challenge the people to live better, offering them either punishment or a better future, depending on their response.

Through Jesus

Many Christians see the gospels as having greater authority than other parts of the Bible, as they contain the words and the actions of Jesus. They believe that because Jesus was the Son of God and not just a human being, he spoke with the authority of God. Some Christians think that the words of Jesus in the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) have the greatest authority of any part of the Bible – sometimes Jesus' words are printed in red letters in Bibles, to make them stand out from the rest of the text and to show their importance.

