

Response to Andy Stanley's Theology

I agree with some of Andy's statements, but also disagree with some.

Biblical Integrity

Here are Andy's claims about the Bible:

1. It doesn't matter if the Old Testament is accurate
2. Scripture is inspired and is human interpretation
3. Christianity doesn't follow the Bible completely
4. Biblical Christianity alone is a strawman's faith, and that following the Bible "just won't wash anymore"
5. New Testament does better without Old Testament, since it can save alone
6. 10 Commandments don't apply to us, since they were given to Israel
7. The Bible is only an effective *tool* used to pull people towards God
8. Old Covenant commands imported into New Testament theology dilutes God's message
9. The Bible has never been the foundation of our faith
10. Bible is simply a historical text

I believe Andy to be correct in the sense that the Old Covenant cannot save today.

Old (Mosaic) Covenant: a conditional covenant holding commandments, judgements, and ordinances that Christians abided by until Christ came and the New Covenant arrived. God's commandments governed people's lives. If they disobeyed, His judgement would be upon them unless they repented, which was found through sacrifices of animals.

New Covenant: a covenant from God by which we live. It contains 5 parts. First is **regeneration**: God writes his law on our hearts. Second is **restoration**: Yahweh is our God again. Third is **personal ministry**: God ministers to us individually along our journey with Him through the Holy Spirit. Fourth is **full justification**: sins are completely forgiven through Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah 31:31-34, "Behold, the days are coming when I will make a new covenant not according to the old covenant from Egypt. This covenant will be in place after this time, says the Lord: "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall they teach each other, for they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

The New Covenant accomplishes what the Old Covenant commandments could only point to, which is a child of God living in a manner consistent with the character of God. The New Covenant also accomplishes what the Old Covenant sacrifices could only point to, which is the perfect sacrifice that animals could

never be sufficient for. Another important change is God's judgement, as Christ's sacrifice atones for all of one's sin, and thus God's wrath isn't implemented because we are forgiven without any required ordinance except faith, which is proven by repentance and works.

This revelation makes the below true:

Hebrews 8:13, "By calling this covenant 'new', he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear." Hebrews 7:11-13, "If perfection could have been attained through Levitical priesthood - and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood - why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also. He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar." 1 Corinthians 15:14, "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith."

Andy thinks that the above make the Old Testament obsolete and a dilution of the Christian faith. This is false. While the ordinances required and the Lord's judgement shifted with covenants, His commands are still strong and relevant to this day. This is stated well in the below.

Galatians 3:19-26, "Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one. Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith."

This passage reinforces the New Covenant as we are judged by our faith in Christ alone. However, it tells that the Old Covenant's laws are what provides righteousness. Isaiah 59:2 tells us that sin creates separation between us and God. The 10 commandments help us to come closer to God. While God's covenant changes, He remains the same yesterday as He is tomorrow. As such, His definition of sin doesn't change, but his reaction to sin does.

Jesus explains this on the Sermon on the Mount, where he says the following:

Matthew 5:17-20, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

In this, Jesus tells us that He did not come to abolish The Lord’s commands, but to fulfill the New Covenant’s promise of being the perfect atonement of sin. He certainly does not say, “The old Law dilutes God’s message.” He says we should follow it in pursuit of righteousness.

Andy was also strongly convinced that the Bible, notably the Old Testament, isn’t completely accurate because it was written by humans, and hence Christianity doesn’t hinge on its integrity. However, Jesus notable said, “. . . Not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law.” If every penstroke is to be followed, that implies that every penstroke is the correct and true Word of God. The below verses emphasize this.

2 Peter 1:20-21, “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture can about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” John 17:8, “For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent me.” Jeremiah 30:2, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Write in a book all the works I have spoken to you.’” Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.” Isaiah 59:21, “ ‘As for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the Lord. ‘My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants - from this time on and forever’”

How then can any Scripture be of human origin? God said that He put His words on our lips that we can follow them forever. That is a convicting message that is conflictive with Andy’s message that Old Testament commandments are best left behind.

It is important to know, however, that Andy is correct when He says that the New Covenant can save alone. It is consistent in the New Testament that whomever believes in Christ will not perish, but have everlasting life. However, while works do not produce faith, real faith should certainly produce works.

James 2:22-24, “You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.”

In other words, works are the fruit of our faith. FAITH = SALVATION + WORKS

As shown above in Matthew 5, Jesus said the least of those in Heaven are those who do not follow the commandments are to be the least in Heaven. He doesn’t say that they will not go to Heaven.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that the Bible is the Word of God, revealed to us to strengthen our faith and to understand God better. It is truly the foundation of our faith. While it is true that the Old Covenant cannot save, we need to follow the Lord’s commandments in pursuit of righteousness, godliness, and to know God better. Andy says defending the Old Testament is like an “argument with your wife.. you just can’t win”. However, it is not an argument with your wife. The Bible is true and is the Lord’s.

Other thoughts

Andy said some good truths as well.

- 3 hooks of our faith, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and Jesus coming and fulfilling the covenants. This is true!
- “I’m not a Christian because of Genesis” True, but if we believe that God breathed each syllable of scripture, why not believe it?
- Jesus commanded us to love others and to love the Lord. True, but isn’t loving the Lord following His commands?