

CHAPTER 3

SCRIPTURE TEACHING CONCERNING ITSELF

Revelation

The Bible claims to contain many revelations from God, and to itself comprise a revelation from God.

Parts of the Bible claiming to come from direct revelation include God's statements to the patriarchs in Genesis; the laws given to Moses from Exodus through Deuteronomy; God's statements to various judges, kings, and prophets; many of the visions and messages given to the writing prophets; the statements of Jesus and of God the Father recorded in the gospels; some statements recorded in Acts and in the epistles; and several sections of the book of Revelation.

In addition to these quoted statements from God, the Scriptures indicate that the whole text of the Bible is spoken from God. For example, the NT regards the OT in its entirety as a revelation from God, as indicated by such expressions as "the (holy or sacred) Scriptures" and in 2 Tim 3:16 (see discussion below).

Revelation is one of the common facts of life. Revelation just means communication; if God is real, it is natural he would communicate. We get most of our knowledge through revelation from someone; we do not figure out everything for ourselves. In fact, without revelation, we could not think much about anything, nor could we carry on a normal life.

As far as our eternal destiny and status with God are concerned, we can find these out only by revelation. As seen in the previous chapter, there are many ways that God has revealed himself to us apart from Scripture, but his primary revelation, especially at this time, is in Scripture.

OT View of Itself

Tone of the OT

The OT is written with complete authority. It is given as God's Word, and expects and allows no contradiction.

Formulas of authority

Expression "Thus says the Lord," "The Lord spoke," 2000+ times

Isaiah—"the word of the Lord" 20x

Jeremiah—"The word of the Lord came to me." nearly 100x

Ezekiel—60x (e.g., 3:16, "The word of the Lord came to me.")

Daniel—messages from God (9:21-23; 10:10-11)

Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah—note beginning formulas

Malachi—"says the Lord" 25x

Careful preservation of OT books

These passages are used especially concerning the Torah.

They were kept in the Holy of Holies:

Exod 25:21, testimony in ark

Exod 40:20, testimony in ark

Deut 10:5, tablets in ark

Deut 31:24-26, Moses' books of law kept beside ark

1 Kgs 8:9, only tablets in ark

cf. 2 Chr 34:14, book of law found in temple (King Josiah)

Recognized authority of the OT law

Deut 17:18-20, king to read and write law by hand

Deut 31:10-13, publicly read Scripture every 7 years at feast of booths

Josh 1:8, meditate day and night on law

1 Sam 15:11-23; cf. Exod 17:14, King Saul disobedient to God by Samuel's word; results in rejection (to keep Scripture—destroy Amalekites; Exod 17:14)

1 Kgs 11:38, promise to Jeroboam: if obey law, then a kingdom

1 Kgs 14:7-16, King Abijah (dynasty of Jeroboam)—to lose kingdom because of disobedience (words of prophet Ahijah)

2 Kgs 14:6, Amaziah does not execute sons for fathers' sins

2 Kgs 17:7-23, northern kingdom exiled

2 Kgs 18:6, Hezekiah keeps God's law

2 Kgs 21:2-16, Manasseh disobeys law

2 Kgs 23:3, young king Josiah—makes covenant to keep law (covenant)

2 Chr 14:4, Asa commands people to obey law

Dan 9:11-13, Daniel's confession: people judged because of law

Neh 1:7-9, Nehemiah's prayer: depending on promises of law (cf. Deut 30:1-6)

Torah recognized by returning exiles:

Ezra 3:2, build altar to obey law of Moses

Ezra 7:10, Ezra study and observe and teach law of Lord

Neh 8:1-8, revival via public reading of law

Neh 10:28-29, people vow to keep law

Neh 13:1-3, people read law, expel "Ammonites and Moabites"

Recognized authority of the prophets

The OT recognizes the prophets as speaking from God, and regards them as possessing the same authority as the law.

2 Kgs 17:13, prophets warn people—sent by God

Neh 9:29-30, people resist prophets, who were sent by God and spoke through his Spirit

Ezek 14:14, 20, Noah, Daniel, and Job recognized as holy men of God

Dan 9:2, 5-6, 10, prophets who gave God's word; refers to Jeremiah (Jer 25:11; 29:10)

Zech. 7:12, earlier prophets—God spoke by his Spirit through them

The NT's View of the OT

Uniformly the NT considers the OT as the Holy Scripture, the Word of God. Most convincing are the OT citations found in the NT. They are employed by the NT writers to prove their various points. And the citation is considered to be proof sufficient, "case closed."

The formulas used to introduce these citations also demonstrate this fact. They include "the Lord says" (Heb 3:7, quoting Ps 95:7-11; cf. Heb 4:7, "God spoke through David"; Ps 95 is untitled), "Scripture says," "The Holy Spirit says," or simply "It is written," or "It says." These introductory formulas would only be appropriate in their contexts if the NT writer and his readers assumed the truthfulness and authority of the OT.

A classic passage revealing the NT's attitude toward the OT and portions of the NT is 2 Tim 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." The term "all Scripture" refers to the entire OT recognized by the Jews (our present 39 books). Paul asserts two things about the OT: it is "God-breathed" (i.e., inspired), and it is "useful" for all the necessary tasks of Christian instruction.

Note. The ASV of 1901 and the NEB incorrectly translate this verse "Every inspired Scripture of God is also profitable . . ." The plainest rendering of the Greek is as it is in the KJV, NIV, and most other translations (including the RSV, NASB, LB, NRSV, NLT, ESV). The Greek phrase in question is *πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν . . .* (*pasa graphe theopneustos kai ophelimos pros elegmon . . .*)

This passage reveals Paul's high view of the OT Scripture, agreeing with the OT's own view of itself.

A second classic passage is 2 Pet 1:20-21.

“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Note in this passage that the Greek text reads “men spoke from God.” Earlier translations had “holy men of God spoke.” The modern translations follow the better Greek text (UBS {A}). In this passage Peter is speaking of the OT Scriptures.

NT View of Itself

While the NT text is not as long as the OT, the NT still contains many passages and statements showing that it regards itself with the same authority as the OT.

The gospel writers define their work as revealing the gospel of Jesus Christ, leading to certain knowledge (Matt 1:1; Mark 1:1; Luke 1:1-4; John 20:31; 21:24-25). All the epistles are written in the authoritative spirit of the apostles and their representatives, and all expect their readers to study, remember, and follow the instructions given (cf. books of James, Jude, Peter, epistles of John, especially Paul, as in 1 Cor 2:13; 14:37; 1 Thess 2:13; 5:27; 2 Thess 3:14). The book of Revelation abounds in such references (e.g., ch. 1-3; 22:18-19).

Especially interesting is 2 Peter 3:15-16, in which Peter asserts that the writings of Paul are equal in authority with the OT Scriptures.

“Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.” (2 Pet. 3:15-16)

Another illuminating example is 1 Timothy 5:18, in which Paul quotes a statement of Jesus found in Luke 10:7 (“The worker deserves his wages”; Luke was written before 1 Timothy; there is a similar verse in Matt 10:10) along with a statement in Deut 25:4 (“Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain”), and refers to them both together as “the Scripture.”

“For the Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘The worker deserves his wages.’” (1 Tim 5:18)

“Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” (Deut 25:4)

“Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.” (Luke 10:7)

The Teaching of Jesus Christ Regarding Scripture

As our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ is the head of the church and our authority in all things. What he says about Scripture it is incumbent on all Christians to believe. This is the final and conclusive argument for those who know Christ.

[For this section of notes, I am indebted to those of Alva J. McClain and John C. Whitcomb, Jr., of Grace Theological Seminary.]

Since Jesus lived on earth when only the OT was available, his references to Scripture refer to the OT. However, as will be seen, he also made provision for the NT, which would be given after his ascension.

Christ was thoroughly familiar with the OT; it saturated his thought and speech, and controlled his actions.

Historical references

Nearly all of OT history is represented in Jesus' preaching.

Gen 1:27	Matt 19:4	created male and female
Gen 2:24	Matt 19:5-6	leave parents, be united to wife

Note in these last two passages how Jesus takes two passages from Genesis, which the critics identify as coming from different sources ("P" and "J"), and puts them together with the simple formula "Have you not read?" He takes these passages together as the word of God (cf. v. 6).

Gen 4; possibly 2 Chr 24:21	Matt 23:35	blood of Abel to blood of Zechariah
Gen 6-9	Matt 24:38	Noah and the flood
Gen 19	Matt 11:23	Sodom's destruction
Gen 19:26	Luke 17:31-32	Lot's wife
Gen 22	John 8:56	Abraham saw Jesus' day
Exod 3:6	Mark 12:26	Moses and burning bush

Exod 16:15	John 6:49	manna in the wilderness
Exod 20:12	Mark 7:10	Moses said to honor parents
Num 21:9	John 3:14	serpent in wilderness
1 Sam 21:6	Matt 12:3	David ate consecrated bread
1 Kgs 4	Matt 6:29	Solomon in his glory
1 Kgs 10	Matt 12:42	Queen of Sheba sees Solomon
1 Kgs 17	Luke 4:25	Elijah comes to widow, stops rain
2 Kgs 5	Luke 4:27	Naaman cleansed by Elishah
Jonah 1:17	Matt 12:40	Jonah in fish 3 days and nights
Jonah 3:5-10	Matt 12:41	Ninevites repent at Jonah's preaching
2 Chr 24:21	Luke 11:51	blood of Zechariah shed at the temple (Matt 23:35 may refer to the prophet Zechariah; cf. Zech 1:1)

We note that Jesus never questioned the factuality of these OT events. This fact is more remarkable because many of these events are miraculous in nature. He cited them and gave full credit to them as historical events, on which one could depend for principles of life. As the Son of God, he certainly would have told his disciples if they were wrong in holding to this high view of Scripture; but rather, he encouraged this attitude.

Continual use by Jesus

Jesus was always quoting the OT, with such phrases as "It is written," and "Have you not read?" His teaching is saturated with OT quotes and allusions (cf. the dark print in the Greek NT, or the quotation marks and marginal notes in modern translations).

In times of crisis he leaned on the Bible. When the devil attacked him in the wilderness, he answered with wonderfully appropriate quotations from Deuteronomy (Matt 4:1-10; cf. Deut 6-8). Even during his anguish on the cross, when he called out in his native Aramaic, it was the words of the OT that he chose to express that anguish (Ps 22:1 in Matt 27:46).

Assertion of authority

More specifically, Jesus stated that the OT was the Scripture, and could not be broken; it was the revelation of God.

Mark 7:9-13	traditions contradict Scripture
Luke 10:25-28	perfect obedience to OT commands will give life
Matt 22:29	“You err, not knowing the Scripture”
John 10:35	“the Scripture cannot be broken”

When Jesus made these claims of authority for the OT, he did not distinguish between its various sections or parts. They were all equally the Word of God. These examples vividly illustrate this point:

Matt 5:18	“Not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the <u>Law</u> until everything is accomplished.”
John 10:34-35	“Is it not written in your <u>Law</u> , ‘I have said you are gods’? If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the <u>word of God</u> came—and the <u>Scripture</u> [<u>Psalm</u> 82:5] cannot be broken”
Luke 24:25-27	“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! . . . And beginning with <u>Moses</u> and all the <u>Prophets</u> , he explained to them what was said in all the <u>Scriptures</u> concerning himself.”
Luke 24:44	“Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the <u>Law of Moses</u> , the <u>Prophets</u> and the <u>Psalms</u> .”

Jesus’ citation of and fulfillment of OT prophecies

One key ingredient of Jesus’ belief, practice, and preaching, was the necessity and certainty of the OT promises’ being fulfilled.

Jesus explained past events as the fulfillment of prophecy:

Mark 14:49	his arrest
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John 13:18 Judas' betrayal

John 17:12 Judas' being lost

Other, future, events were yet to take place to fulfill prophecy:

Matt 21:42 rejected stone to be capstone

Matt 26:31 shepherd to be struck, sheep to be scattered

Matt 26:64-65 Son of Man to be seen sitting at right hand of God

Jesus even adjusted his life to fulfill OT prophecies about himself:

Matt 5:17 came not to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them

Matt 21:1-5 triumphal entry on a donkey

Matt 26:24 Son of Man will go, just as it is written about him

John 19:28 "so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty'"

(Passion narratives) the crucifixion itself

Jesus' Provision for the NT

It is clear from all the preceding discussion that Jesus Christ accepted and taught the full authority of the Old Testament.

Before his death Jesus stated that he would reveal more to his apostles after his resurrection:

"Jesus replied, 'You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'" (John 13:7)

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. . . . Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father." (John 16:12-13, 25)

The apostle Paul was included, for he had a similar call from Jesus (Acts 9:4-6, 15; Gal 1:1). This would be possible through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26-27; 16:13; cf. Acts 1:8).

Jesus declared what he would reveal to his apostles, including all his words, as in the gospels; all his truth, as in the epistles; and things to come, as in prophetic passages such as the Thessalonian letters and Revelation (John 14:26; 16:13-15). As John 16:13 says, he would lead them into “all the truth” (see Greek).

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26)

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth [Greek: ‘all the truth’]. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.” (John 16:13-15)

As a result of this revelation to the apostles, their words would have the same authority as those of Christ himself and of the OT:

Matt 10:1, 14-20, 40, “He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. . . . If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

“Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. . . . He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.”

Luke 10:1, 16, “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. . . . He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

John 15:20, “Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”

John 17:18, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”

John 17:20, “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.”

Some of the NT writers (those not apostles—Mark, Luke, James, Jude, perhaps the author of Hebrews) had the designation of prophets (cf. Acts 15:32; Rom 16:25-26; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 3:5; 4:11), whose words were likewise inspired by God and approved by the apostles. Thus, through his apostles, Christ approved of the NT writings just as he had of the OT writings.