

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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OUR VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

Barry O'Dell

David wrote, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). In direct connection with David, Peter wrote, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). *Private interpretation* found in the King James Version is rendered "...*thought up by the prophet himself*" in the Living Bible. The Bible claims for itself that man was not the *originator* of the message. Think about it - if the Bible is not inspired as it claims it is, it cannot be trusted at all. However, if the Bible is what it claims to be in both Testaments - the fully inspired, inerrant word of God - our view of it is eternally important!

A beneficial study for Christians is to examine the various passages that address the writing of God's word. For example, Daniel wrote, "In the first of his reign [Darius] I Daniel *understood by books* the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:2). Daniel, an inspired prophet of God, was reading the writings of Jeremiah, an inspired prophet of God! It seems that Daniel read Jeremiah 25:12: "And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord..." In the process of choosing the first king of Israel we read, "Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and *wrote it in a book*, and laid it up before the Lord" (1 Sam. 10:25). Passages such as these are commentaries on what Paul wrote: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (2 Tim. 3:16-17). God has revealed His will to various people, in various ways, and during different times and, thankfully, we have access to it today! How should we view this book we call the Bible?

Inspiration. When Paul wrote that all Scripture was given *by inspiration of God* he was saying that all Scripture was breathed out by God Himself (2 Tim. 3:16). Paul was specifically speaking of the Old Testament Scriptures that Timothy had known since he was a child (2 Tim. 3:15). However, Peter also referred to Paul's writings as Scripture (2 Pet. 3:16). The Holy Spirit *moved* these men to not only speak, but also to write God's will. Paul also addresses this subject in First Corinthians 2:9-13. The Bible is inspired by God!

Revelation. Paul wrote, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but

the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. 2:11-12). The Bible is *the* revelation of God's mind to man. An example of this from the Old Testament is found in Deuteronomy 9:10. "And the Lord delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, the Lord spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly." In the New Testament Paul claimed that his writings were "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). As we read the Scriptures we must understand that they are the revelation of God's mind to man.

Understandable. Just as is true about *inspiration* and *revelation*, both Testaments address the fact they are understandable. Moses wrote, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, *that we may do all the words of this law*" (Deut. 29:29). After the return from Babylonian captivity the Levites noted that Israel had not kept the law nor hearkened unto God's testimonies and commandments (Neh. 9:33-34). It was not that they were incapable of understanding and obeying God's law, it was that they chose not to! In the New Testament Paul states that when we read we can understand the mystery that has now been revealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:4-5). There are those who hold the view that the Bible is not understandable until the Holy Spirit enlightens them on the meaning. Think about that for a minute! Did the Holy Spirit reveal God's mind to the minds of men? Paul said that He did (1 Cor. 2:9-13). Were God and the Holy Spirit unable to communicate to the minds of men in an understandable way? Did they spend 1,500 years with 40 different writers in an effort to produce a book that could not be understood? Of course not!

Preservation. David wrote, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89). Jesus taught, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). Jesus Himself read a copy of Isaiah 61 from a scroll that was kept in the synagogue (Lk. 4:16-21). The Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11). God, through His providence and power, has preserved His word through time. Paul instructed the Colossians, "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" (Col. 4:16). Inspired letters were already being circulated in the first century!

When we approach the Bible we must do it with the correct perspective. The Bible is the inspired, preserved, and understandable revelation of the mind of God to man. We need David's attitude: "O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97).

JESUS' VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

Victor Eskew

God has revealed His will to man in the pages of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Every human being must choose how he will respond to God's Word. This was true of Jesus as well. The Bible says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us..." (Jn. 1:14). Jesus became a human being. As a human being, He too had to decide about how He would handle God's holy Word. His choice is shown to us in the pages of the books we referred to as the *Gospels*.

First, Jesus understood the Word of God to be the final authority in religious matters. When spiritual questions arose, Jesus always pointed individuals to the Word of God. According to Matthew 19:3 the Pharisees asked, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Jesus immediately pointed them to the first book of Moses: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6). On another occasion, a lawyer asked Him this question, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Lk. 10:25). Jesus also pointed this man to the law. "He said unto him, what is written in the law? How readest thou?" (Lk. 10:26). Notice, Jesus did not ask, "What do you think?" or, "What do you feel?" He asked, "What is written in the law?" The Law of Moses was His source of authority. The Sadducees also asked Jesus a question about the resurrection (Matt. 22:23-28). Jesus' response was again from the Word of God: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God...But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?..." (Matt. 22:29-32). The quotation Jesus set forth was from the Book of Exodus, chapter 3. All of these accounts from our Lord's life show that He was deeply concerned about what the law had to say. It was His source of authority for all spiritual concerns.

Second, Jesus understood the process of inspiration that brought the Word of God down to man. He knew that human authors had penned the Old Testament. He often referred to those authors: Moses (Matt. 8:4; 19:8); Isaiah (Matt. 13:14; 15:7), and Daniel (Matt. 24:15). He also knew that the Law was the Word of God. In Matthew 15, Jesus referred to "the commandment of God" (v. 6). He had reference to the Fifth Commandment of the Ten Commandments that had

been given to Israel by Moses. Jesus understood that the Law of Moses was authored by men who had written down the Word of God. They could do this because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Listen to Jesus as He spoke about the writings of David, "For David said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Mk. 12:36). David spoke, not of his own accord, but "by the Holy Ghost." Jesus knew that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:21).

Third, Jesus trusted in the Word of God to govern and direct His life. In Matthew 4, we read about Satan's tempting of the Christ. The evil one challenged His claims to be the Son of God. Satan enticed His strongest desires. The devil promised Him great power. The tempter even quoted Scripture in an attempt to get Jesus to yield to him. Jesus, however, stood firm and did not give in to the enemy's enticements. He did this by quoting the Word of God from Deuteronomy. "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). "Jesus said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:7). "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Deut. 10:20; Matt. 4:10). This event in the life of our Lord is extremely encouraging. It shows that we can resist temptation in the same manner as Jesus did. To do so, however, we must have the same faith in the Word of God that Jesus did.

Fourth, Jesus understood that God's Word is not to be replaced by the traditions of man. The traditions of the Jews were often thought of as just as authoritative as the inspired words of the Law of Moses. The Jews would condemn anyone who violated those traditions. They confronted Jesus on one occasion for this very thing. Let's listen to the conversation: "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightiest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your

tradition” (Matt. 15:1-6). Jesus understood that the commandments of men do not trump the Word of God. In fact, they often contradict God’s Word. When faced with a choice between the commandments of man or the commandments of God, Jesus chose the commandments of God every time. Jesus understood this truth: “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9).

Fifth, Jesus knew the Word of God was something to be obeyed. He taught obedience to God’s Word. In the Sermon on the Mount, He said: “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19). In that same sermon, Jesus also said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). Jesus attended the feast days in Jerusalem (Matt. 26:17). When He healed the lepers, he directed them to go to the priests in order to be declared clean (Matt. 8:4). Jesus was so meticulous in keeping the law that He Himself never sinned (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22).

Sixth, Jesus understood that the Word of God contain prophecies that spoke directly about Him as the coming Messiah and Savior of the world. When in the small town of Nazareth, Jesus went into the synagogue and was given the book of Isaiah to read. He read from Isaiah 61. When He completed the reading, He said: “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Lk. 4:21). He exhorted the Jews with these words, “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (Jn. 5:39). After His resurrection, He appeared to His apostles, “and he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be

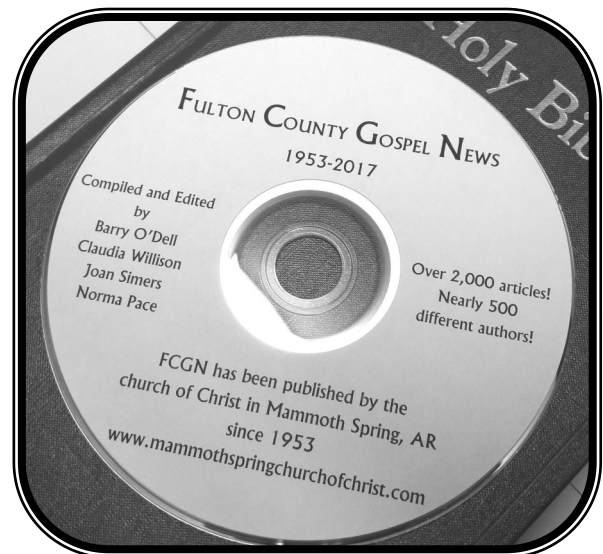
fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Lk. 24:44).

Jesus had an extremely high regard for the Word of God. He never diminished its authority. He never laughed at it or ridiculed it. He never tried to get men to disobey it. He held it up for what it is - The Word of God. He trusted it. He obeyed it. He taught it. Jesus loved the Word of God. May all of us learn from His example and follow Him.

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IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

George Bailey - December 1964 FCGN

If the meaning of the Bible is beyond man’s grasp, how could one expect to know God and be saved? Doesn’t it stand to reason that the God who gave the revelation by which one is drawn to Him (Jn. 6:44-45), and by which some day he will be judged (Jn. 12:48), would enable man to understand that revelation?

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). Through study one can “show himself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

There is not a royal road to learning. One must study; there is no substitute. This does not mean that one must become a scholar, but it does mean that he, with an open heart and receptive mind, must become a diligent, sincere searcher for truth. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). If in Jesus’ day the common people “heard Him gladly,” surely the “average” person today can hear and understand His message.

May/June 2018 Contributors

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Pilot (Mammoth Spring, AR)	\$700.00
Cottage Grove (Cottage Grove, TN)	\$250.00
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Biblical Worship

- Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-24)
 - Prayer (Acts 12:5; Phil. 4:6-7)
- Vocal music only (Eph. 5:19; Heb. 13:15)
 - Giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7-8)
 - Preaching (Acts 2:42; 20:7)

The Churches of Christ

- Bible only (Rom. 1:16; 2 Pet. 1:3)
 - Name (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
 - Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
 - Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
 - Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Body of Christ and Christ alone is the Head and Savior (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23)
- Added to the church today just as in the 1st century (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13)

Salvation

- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
 - Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)
 - Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
 - Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)

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