

The Apostolic View Of Scripture

Having examined the view of Jesus and the Evangelists, we now turn to the remainder of the New Testament to learn of the Apostle's view of the Scriptures. It will only be possible to highlight this, due to space constraints. We shall see, however, that the Apostolic view of the Scriptures was a high view that held the Scriptures to be God's Word, authoritative, and true.

Acts

“Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.” (Acts 1:16–20)

As Peter spoke to the Jerusalem church regarding the need to select a replacement for Judas, he appealed to the Psalms. His appeal to the Psalms shows that he regarded them to be the very Word of God, because the Holy Spirit spoke them by the mouth of David, though they were very obviously written words. We should note, also, that this is the direct Word of God though it comes to us through man. We do not need a text to be prefaced, “Thus saith the LORD,” for it to be the direct Word of God. The Scriptures come to us by the Holy Spirit through men, and we can be content with that.

“And when they heard that, they lift up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” (Acts 4:24–28)

This is an important passage to consider as we examine the apostolic view of Scriptures. Here we find that the early church viewed God as speaking by the mouth of David in the Psalms. What is crucial is that we recognize that they are saying this in reference to the Scriptures. Though David wrote the Psalm to which they refer, they consider it to be spoken by God through David. Thus it is the Word of God.

Some seem to think that those who hold this view speak of God somehow dictating the words to those who recorded Scripture. The truth is that there were a number of ways in which God communicated truth to those who wrote Scripture. The final result was the Word of God, regardless of how God gave the Word to those recording it. One thing is sure, however, and that is the fact that God used men to give us His Word.

Romans

“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” (Romans 9:15)

“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” (Romans 9:17)

“As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.” (Romans 9:25)

For Paul, what Scripture says is what God says. Notice how he says, “he (God) saith, and then said, “the Scripture saith”, and again says, “He saith also...” These statements show that Paul believed that when Scripture speaks, God speaks.

*“For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” (Romans 10:11)
“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, A tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: He that believeth shall not make haste.” (Isaiah 28:16)*

Paul states here that the “Scripture saith” while quoting a passage that says “thus saith the Lord God.” Paul's quoting of the writing shows that he viewed the Scriptures words to be on the same level as God's words, because what Scripture says is what God says.

“But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” (Romans 10:19–21)

Note the progression of “Moses saith,” then “Esaias...saith”, and then “he (God) saith.” What Moses and Isaiah said in Scripture is what God said.

Scripture, then, is God's Word.

1&2 Corinthians

“In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 14:21)

“For with stammering lips and another tongue Will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; And this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear.” (Isaiah 28:11–12)

In this passage we find once more that Paul understood the words of Scripture to be the Words of God. As Paul quotes his text, he shows that the Scripture is giving us God's Word even though Isaiah does not present his writing as directly quoting God.

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,” (2 Corinthians 6:17)

“Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; Go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.” (Isaiah 52:11)

Once again we find that Paul demonstrated that what Scripture says is what God says.

Galatians

“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” (Galatians 3:8)

Here Paul says that the Scripture preached the gospel to Abraham yet, when we turn to Genesis 12:1-3, we find that God Himself was speaking. Once again we find that Paul believed that Scripture is God's Word. What Scripture says is what God says.

Ephesians

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” (Ephesians 4:7–8)

“Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; Yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.” (Psalm 68:18)

There are some who seek to declare that Scripture is not God's Word. They use the Psalms as an example, because they don't understand how the praise, prayers, pleas, and poetry of men could be God's Word. Paul quotes Psalm 68:18, which is the word of David, and identifies it as the words of Christ (Ephesians 4:7). If the he referred to in Ephesians 4:8 would have been David, I believe Paul would have said so. Instead, the reference points us back to Ephesians 4:7 and Christ, who is mentioned there as being the one giving gifts to the church.

Hebrews

“For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?” (Hebrews 1:5)

“And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” (Hebrews 1:6)

“And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.” (Hebrews 1:7)

“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.” (Hebrews 1:8)

“And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.” (Hebrews 1:10)

In each of these quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures the writer to the Hebrews demonstrates his belief that what Scripture says is what God says.

“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me.” (Hebrews 2:11–13)

“I will declare thy name unto my brethren: In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” (Psalm 22:22)

“And I will wait upon the LORD, That hideth his face from the house of Jacob, And I will look for him.” (Isaiah 8:17)

We see once again that the writer to the Hebrews quotes Scripture as the Word of God. What Scripture says is what God says.

We find other instances in Hebrews where the writer demonstrates his belief that Scripture is the Word of God:

Hebrews 3:7 the Holy Spirit says

4:3 He spoke

4:6 He...saying

4:8 He spoke

All of these demonstrate the writer's belief that God speaks in and through the Scriptures, and that Scripture is the Word of God.

This is followed up by more references in Hebrews 5:5,10;6:16-18;8:8-12;10:15-17,29;12:5.

There is abundant testimony to the fact that the writer to the Hebrews understood Scripture to be the Word of God. It is worth our while to understand that he was writing to Jewish Christians who, no doubt, agreed with him on the issue.

1&2 Peter

“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which

are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.” (1 Peter 1:10–12)

Peter says that the Spirit of God was in the prophets who told us of the Christ's suffering and glory.

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the 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 Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:19–21)

Peter declares that the Scriptures came to us through men who were led by the Spirit of God. It was not simply a man's decision to write, but he wrote as he was directed by God's Spirit.

What is the result? Would it not be the Word of God in written form?

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)” (2 Peter 2:1–8)

“which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.” (2 Peter 2:15–16)

It is very instructive to see that Peter viewed the Genesis historical narratives as being correct. He also believed that the narrative about Balaam and his ass was correct. While many today question or reinterpret various historical narratives in the Scriptures, Peter accepts them at face value and refers to them as being trustworthy.

When we look at all of the passages mentioned (and there are many more that were not given due to space constraints), we can see that the New Testament writers viewed the Scriptures as the Word of God.

Let us take seriously the words of Charles Hodge:

“What does the Bible teach on the subject? If our Lord and his Apostles declare the Old Testament to be the Word of God; that its authors spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; that what they said, the Spirit said; if they refer to the facts and to the very words of Scripture as of divine authority; and if the same infallible divine guidance was promised to the writers of the New Testament, and claimed by themselves; and if their claim was authenticated by God himself; then there is no room for, as there is no need of, these theories of partial inspiration. The whole Bible was written under such an influence as preserved its human authors from all error, and makes it for the Church the infallible rule of faith and practice.¹”

¹ Charles Hodge, vol. 1, *Systematic Theology*, 182 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

In our final two articles about the way that the New Testament writers viewed Scripture we shall consider the New Testament Scriptures and then the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures.