

The Testimony Of Jesus And The Synoptics Regarding The Word Of God

As we consider the inerrancy of the Scriptures we must address what the Scriptures say about themselves. While some may say that it is circular reasoning and arguing to declare Scripture to be the Word of God based upon the testimony of Scripture itself, we declare that it is not necessarily so. We also have the testimony of history which shows to us that Scripture was accepted as the Word of God by holy people of old. Couple this with the presuppositions that we have mentioned in a previous article and we have good reason to read the Scriptures and take their words as reliable testimony.

In this article we shall consider the testimony of Jesus and the synoptic gospels regarding the Scriptures being the Word of God. We shall use Matthew as representative of the synoptics. As we do so we shall see that Jesus and the evangelists took the Old Testament texts to be reliable, authoritative, and the Word of God. Not all passages in Matthew will be considered, but we shall look at enough texts to show us what view Jesus and the evangelists held regarding the Old Testament Scriptures.

“Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (Matthew 1:22–23)

This first text is an excellent text for us to consider. Liberals who do not believe that Jesus was conceived and born of a virgin would certainly desire to excise this verse. They would love to take the passage quoted (Isaiah 7:14) and tell us all about the Hebrew not necessarily meaning a literal virgin. This passage, however, shows us that Matthew accepted that there was a literal virgin who conceived and bore a child, and that it was also the meaning of the text in Isaiah. Not only so, but he also tells us that the Lord spoke by the prophet. In other words, Matthew viewed the writing of Isaiah as the speaking of the Lord.¹ He saw this as God's Word.

“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.” (Matthew 4:4)

“Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” (Matthew 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.” (Matthew 4:10)

While there have been diverse views regarding the writing and composition of Deuteronomy, one thing is certain: Jesus' quoting of Deuteronomy shows that He viewed it as authoritative. He also showed His belief that Scripture is the Word of God by quoting that man shall live by the Word of God (Deuteronomy 8:3), and then quoting other Scriptures as authoritative. Had Jesus not believed them to be the Words of God He would not have believed them to be authoritative. Yet, Jesus embraced both the Divine origins of Scripture as well as the authority of Scripture.²

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:17–19)

¹ It is worth noting that God's Word does not have to be orally from God. To be God's Word, it must come from God. Thus God's Word can be written, and it can be prophetic, poetic, historical, or some other genre. To be God's Word, it simply has to have God as its source.

² It is instructive to see that Satan did not argue with Jesus about Scripture the way that he argues with the rest of us. He simply accepted Jesus' rebuke, thus showing that even Satan must bow to the authority of God's Word.

This passage quotes Jesus as upholding the enduring nature of the Old Testament Scriptures in the most minute of points as well as the authority of the Scriptures. Considering what we have already seen of Jesus' response to Satan, it is obvious that He is once again asserting that the Scriptures are the authoritative words of God.

“that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” (Matthew 8:17)

Here we see that Jesus does not present to us multiple authors of the prophecy of Isaiah, but accepts that Isaiah was author of the latter as well as the former parts; and this is, of course, contradictory to much liberal scholarship today. Jesus, however, saw Isaiah chapter fifty-three as being authoritative, and as Matthew wrote he made no distinction between Isaiah 7:14 (See statements on Matthew 1:22-23) and Isaiah 53:4, thus accepting both as God's Word.

“At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were a hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was a hungred, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.” (Matthew 12:1–8)

In this one passage we find Jesus affirming the reliability and truthfulness of 1 Samuel 2:16, Exodus 25:30, Leviticus 24:5-9, Numbers 28:9-10, Hosea 6:6, and even the Genesis creation account (Genesis 2:3)! He does this in opposition to the Pharisee's claim that He and His disciples were acting unlawfully. Jesus simply shows them that the historical narratives of Scripture are authoritative as well as the law, and certainly of greater authority than the Pharisee's interpretation of the law. At the same time Jesus asserted that it was He who was the Creator who made the sabbath holy, thus insinuating to the Pharisees that it was His word of which they were speaking.

To put it briefly, Jesus presents the Old Testament Scriptures as His Word.

“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan; and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? 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 father and mother, and shall cleave to 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 not man put asunder.”
(Matthew 19:1–6)

In this passage we find Jesus presenting the Genesis creation account as a reliable historical narrative that is also the authoritative Word of God.

No doubt there are some who would love to argue about my conclusion here, but they must certainly deal with the person of Jesus before they go any farther. If Jesus is indeed the sinless Son of God, we must accept the absolute truthfulness of His Words. Jesus did not deceive the people by accommodating His speech to the errors of their day. In fact, Jesus was on the offensive against their errors (See Matthew 19:1-9 for an example.). Neither was Jesus ignorant of the truth regarding the origins of mankind. To embrace a such as this would be to diminish Jesus' perfections as well as His deity: a position that is unacceptable to those who believe the New Testament Scriptures.

Our presupposition is that Jesus is the sinless Son of God who speaks truly. Thus we accept Jesus is truly referring to the Genesis creation account as a reliable and authoritative historical narrative.

“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.” (Matthew 22:41–46)

Jesus here states that David spoke in the Spirit, i.e. David was inspired. Jesus viewed the Psalms as the inspired Word of God given to us through David.

“And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.”
(Matthew 27:35)

Matthew also considered the writings of David to be the Word of God. Here he states that David was a prophet whose words were being fulfilled in Jesus.

Having taken the Gospel According To Matthew as representative, we have seen that the writers of the synoptics as well as Jesus viewed the Old Testament Scriptures as the inspired, reliable, and authoritative Word of God.