

A

---

CHRIST'S VIEW OF THE AUTHORITY  
OF CANONICAL SCRIPTURE:  
AN INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

Norman Geisler  
Wheaton College

SUMMARY: Christ made authoritative quotes from or references to at least eight Old Testament books (possibly ten) including some from each of the three major sections of the O. T. canon. This fact correlated with the fact that similar authority is granted to the O. T. as a whole would lead us to believe that Christ accepted and taught the authority of every book in the O. T. Jewish canon. Certainly there is no evidence to the contrary in the gospels and we have every reason to believe that there was no distinction made between the books He quoted and the ones He did not quote.

2. Persons referred to as <sup>Old</sup>historical by Christ.

- ~~EXOD~~ a. Moses Mk. 7:10; 12:19, 36. — <sup>DAVID</sup>
- ~~ISA~~ b. Isaiah Mt. 13:14, 15; 15:7-9.
- ~~DANIEL~~ c. Daniel Mt. 24:15.
- ~~JONAH~~ d. Jonah Mt. 12:39-41; 16:4; Lk. 11:29.
- ~~GEN~~ e. Abel Lk. 11:51; Mt. 23:35.
- ~~GEN~~ f. Noah Lk. 17:26, 27.
- ~~GEN~~ g. Adam and Eve Mt. 19:5-7.
- ~~GEN~~ h. Abraham Mt. 22:31, 32.
- ~~GEN~~ i. Isaac Mt. 22:31, 32.
- ~~GEN~~ j. Jacob Mt. 22:31, 32.
- ~~GEN~~ k. Lot and wife Lk. 17:28, 29, 32.
- ~~KGS~~ l. Queen of Sheba Mt. 12:42; Lk. 11:31.
- ~~KGS~~ m. Solomon Mt. 12:42; Lk. 11:31.
- ~~KGS~~ n. Elijah Lk. 4:25.
- ~~KGS~~ o. Widow of Sidon Lk. 4:25. (Zarephath)
- ~~KGS~~ p. Naaman the Leper Lk. 4:27.
- ~~NUM~~ q. "Fathers" Jn. 6:49.
- ~~CHRN~~ r. Zacharius Mt. 23:35; Lk. 11:51.
- s. ~~The prophets Jn. 8:132.~~

3. Events referred to as historical by Christ.

- ~~GEN~~ a. Creation Mt. 19:4, 5.
- ~~GEN~~ b. First marriage Mt. 19:5-7.
- ~~GEN~~ c. Murder of Abel Lk. 11:51.
- ~~CHRN~~ d. Murder of Zachariah Mt. 23:35.
- ~~GEN~~ e. Destruction of Sodom Lk. 17:28, 29, 32.
- ~~EX~~ f. Burning bush Lk. 20:37.
- ~~EX/NUM~~ g. Giving of manna Jn. 6:31, 32, 49.
- ~~NUM~~ h. Lifting up serpent in wilderness Jn. 3:14.
- ~~SAI~~ i. David's eating showbread Mt. 12:3, 4.
- ~~KGS~~ j. Visit of Queen of Sheba Mt. 12:42.
- ~~KINGS~~ k. Cleansing of Naaman Lk. 4:25-27.
- ~~JONAH~~ l. Jonah's 3 days in the fish Mt. 12:39-41; 16:4.

SUMMARY: The manner in which Jesus referred to these events seems to demand their historicity, that is, His teaching of their historicity. Often the point of Jesus' teaching hinges upon the factual reality of these persons and events. Sometimes Jesus compares the reality of His own ministry to the factuality of these happenings in such a way that to deny the latter would involve a denial of the former.

## II. THE NATURE OF OLD TESTAMENT AUTHORITY AS USED BY CHRIST.

- A. His regard for the writings of men as the Word of God.
  - 1. Moses wrote: "Honor thy Father and thy Mother, etc." (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16) Jesus said: "For God said, Honor thy Father and thy Mother etc." (Matt. 15:4; Mk. 7:10)
  - 2. Isaiah. These words of Isaiah are called, "the commandment of God" (Mk. 7:8). To break them is to "make void the Word of God" (Mk. 7:13).
- B. His use of the Old Testament to resist Satan.
  - 1. The method--Simple quotations from Deut. 8:3; 6:16; 16:13 cf. Mt. 4:4,7,10 respectively.
  - 2. The manner--authoritative reference to what is "written".
  - 3. The meaning--an implicit assumption of the sufficiency of the Old Testament Scriptures to silence even the insidious subtleties of Satan's supernatural powers as the voice of God.
- C. His use of the Old Testament to rebuke the Pharisees, etc.
  - 1. "Have ye not read" (Mt. 19:4). He rebukes ignorance of the Biblical teaching on divorce.
  - 2. "Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures" etc. (Mk. 12:24; Mt. 22:29). He rebukes the Sadducees for not accepting the resurrection as taught in the Old Testament. Argument based on the tense of a verb.
  - 3. "It is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer" etc. He rebuked the money changers and cleansed the temple by a quotation from Isaiah 56:7.
  - 4. "In your law it is written, that the witness of two men is true" (Jn. 8:17) is used to rebuke Pharisees for denying His witness.
  - 5. "Is it not written in your law...and the Scriptures cannot be broken...." (Jn. 10:34-35) Used to rebuke the "Jews" who thought Christ blasphemously claimed to be Deity.
  - 6. "David in the Spirit, called him Lord saying...." (Mt. 22:43) Jesus silenced Pharisees by quote from Psalms 110:1.
  - 7. "Jesus saith...did ye never read...." (Mt. 21:16) He rebukes the chief priests' and scribes' indignation at Him.

SUMMARY: Here in the direct context of authority arising out of conflict with the religious parties of His day, Jesus makes repeated appeal to what is written in the Old Testament as final judge and arbitrator of religious disputes. He unmistakably commits Himself in the very core of His earthly ministry to a high view of the authority of Old Testament Scriptures. That all of these could be ad hominem would take an inconceivable stretch of the imagination not necessary for sound exegesis.

D. His use of Old Testament to teach the multitudes and Disciples.

1. The general declarations.
  - a. He came to fulfill the O. T. not destroy it (Mt. 5:17).
  - b. All of the O. T. speaks of Him (Lk. 24:27,44,45; Jn. 5:39,46).
  - c. All things written of Him in the O. T. must be fulfilled (Lk. 18:31; 24:44,45).
  - d. The Scriptures bear witness of Him (Jn. 5:39).
2. The particular references.
  - a. In the sermon on the mount (Mt. 5:21,27,31,33,38,43).
  - b. Jesus told the cleansed leper to offer a sacrifice as Moses had commanded him (Mt. 8:4; Mk. 1:44; Lk. 5:14).
  - c. Jesus told the rich young man to keep the commandments (Mt. 19:18-19).
  - d. Jesus told the lawyer to keep the commandments (Lk. 10:25-28).
  - e. Jesus taught in the temple saying, "Is it not written..." (Mk. 11:17).
  - f. He taught in the synagogue from Isaiah (Lk. 4:18-20).

E. His use of the Old Testament as "predictive".

1. In general.
  - a. "I came to fulfill..." (Mt. 5:17).
  - b. "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms concerning me" (Lk. 24:44).
  - c. "Ye search the Scriptures...and these are they that bear witness of me" (Jn. 5:39).
  - d. All things written must be accomplished (Lk. 18:30; 21:22).
2. In particular.
  - a. The betrayer, "As it is written of Him" (Mt. 26:24; cf. Jn. 13:18; 17:12).
  - b. The betrayal, "For it is written" (Mt. 26:24; from Zech. 13:7).
  - c. The betrayal, "How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be" (Mt. 26:54).
  - d. The betrayal, "All this is come to pass, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled" (Mt. 26:56).
  - e. The suffering of Christ, "...it is written of the son of man, that He should suffer many things..." (Mk. 9:13).
  - f. The hatred of Christ, "...that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their law, they hated me..." (Jn. 15:25).
  - g. The ministry of the baptist, "This is He of whom it is written..." (Mt. 11:10; Lk. 7:27).
  - h. The cross, "For it is written, I will smite the Shepherd..." (Mt. 26:31).



- i. The ministry of the baptist, "As it is written in the prophets..." (Mk. 1:2).
- j. Christ's teaching ministry, "It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God" (Jn. 6:45).
- k. Triumphal entry, "As it is written...thy King cometh..." (Jn. 12:14-15).
- l. All things that are written through the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man" (Lk. 18:31,34; 21:22).
- m. Giving of Spirit, "He that believeth on me as the Scripture hath said..." (Jn. 7:38).
- n. Thirst of Christ, "Jesus knowing...that the Scriptures must be accomplished, saith, I thirst" (Jn. 19:28).
- o. Death for sinners, "For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me" (Lk. 22:37).

**SUMMARY:** Jesus' Messianic consciousness was centered in the realization of the necessity that Old Testament Scripture concerning Him must be fulfilled. Whether He meant these Scriptures found their higher realization in Him or were predictive of Him or both is of little consequence.<sup>1</sup> It is still clear that His whole messianic mission was based on the consciousness of their importance and authority.

**CONCLUSION:** If the gospel records give us an accurate record of the teaching of Jesus, and they must else we are left in complete scepticism as to what He taught, then it is clear that Jesus thought and taught that the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures possess divine authority in religious matters. His quotations from (or references to) the O. T. include either the history or authority of the following:

- 1 Genesis--Mt. 12:39; 19:5; 23:35; Lk. 11:51; 17:26.
- 2 Exodus--Mt. 5:21; Mk. 14:24; Jn. 6:31.
- 3 Leviticus--Mt. 8:4; Mk. 1:44; Lk. 5:14.
- 4 Numbers--Jn. 3:14. *1 COR 10, HEB 3:5-7 (12-7)*
- 5 Deuteronomy--Mt. 4:4,7,10; Lk. 10:27; Jn. 8:17.
- 6 Judges--~~Jn. 10:34~~ *(PSA 82:6) NB 11:32; ACT 13:20*
- 7 Samuel--Mt. 12,3,4; 22:43,44.
- 8 Kings--Mt. 12:42; Lk. 4:25,26,27. *(A) EKG 19:10,18 → Rom 11:3,4*
- 9 Chronicles--Mt. 12:42; 23:35; Lk. 11:51.
- 10 Nehemiah--~~Jn. 6:31~~.
- 11 Psalms--Mt. 12:42; Mk. 12:10; Lk. 20:17; Jn. 10:34.
- 12 Isaiah--Mt. 11:10; 21:13; Mk. 7:6; Lk. 4:17; Jn. 6:45.
- 13 Jeremiah--~~Jn. 6:45~~.
- 14 Ezekiel--Jn. 7:38.
- 15 Daniel--Mt. 24:15.
- 16 The prophets (12)
  - Hosea--Lk. 23:30.
  - Zechariah--Mt. 26:31.

17 JOSH 1:5 (Leut 31:6) - *NAB 13:5*  
 18 RUTH 4:21 - *MT 1:5*  
 19 EZRA 2:1 - *MT 1:12*  
 20 PSALM 5:13 - *1 COR 3:19*  
 21 PROV 3:34 - *JS 4:6*

21  
 1 ECL 11:1 - *2 SA 6:9*  
 11:10 - *2 JN 2:22*  
 3:2 - *1 HEB 2:28*  
 5:10 - *2 MCG 10*  
 22 5:2 - *MT 6:7*  
 23 LAM 3:30 - *MT 27:30*  
 3:33 - *1 HEB 12:10*

23  
 24  
 25  
 26  
 27  
 28  
 29  
 30  
 31  
 32  
 33  
 34  
 35  
 36  
 37  
 38  
 39  
 40  
 41  
 42  
 43  
 44  
 45  
 46  
 47  
 48  
 49  
 50  
 51  
 52  
 53  
 54  
 55  
 56  
 57  
 58  
 59  
 60  
 61  
 62  
 63  
 64  
 65  
 66  
 67  
 68  
 69  
 70  
 71  
 72  
 73  
 74  
 75  
 76  
 77  
 78  
 79  
 80  
 81  
 82  
 83  
 84  
 85  
 86  
 87  
 88  
 89  
 90  
 91  
 92  
 93  
 94  
 95  
 96  
 97  
 98  
 99  
 100

The nature of this authority is final (it was used to resist Satan and rebuke Pharisees), divine (writings of the O. T. men are identified with Word of God), sufficient for faith and practice (Jesus used them in His teaching as to how men should live).

---

<sup>1</sup>It is difficult to tell whether "fulfill" (πληρῶσαι) means: 1) complete, fill up; 2) realize, bring to full expression, or 3) accomplish, bring to pass. The context would seem to eliminate the merely predictive aspect of number three. The real choice seems to be between shades of one or two.

I. THE EXTENT OF AUTHORITY WITH REFERENCE TO BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

A. References to the Old Testament as a whole.

1. Lk. 24:44,45. All things written in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms concerning Christ must be fulfilled.
2. Lk. 24:27. Christ interpreted to them (two disciples on road to Emmaus) from Moses and all the Prophets the things concerning Himself.
3. Mt. 23:35 (Lk. 11:51). Jews are guilty for the blood of Old Testament Prophets from "Abel to Zachariah" (a comparable phrase from "Genesis to Revelation").
4. Jn. 10:38. "The Scriptures cannot be broken."
5. Jn. 5:39, 46. The Scriptures possess eternal life and speak of Christ.
6. Mt. 22:29-33 (Mk. 12:24). Ignorance of the Sadducees arises from their not knowing the Scriptures.
7. Mt. 5:17. Christ came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. Not even the least little part of it will pass away unaccomplished.

SUMMARY: Here reference is made by Christ to the authority of the Old Testament as a whole including the three major sections into which it was classified, viz., the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. All of these speak of Him. All of it must be fulfilled. None of it can be broken, etc. Hence Christ seems to accept the whole body of Judaistic Scriptures as canonical and authoritative.

B. Reference to certain books in particular.

1. Books quoted as authoritative.

a. Books of the Law.

- (1) Exodus. Jn. 6:31; Mt. 5:21; Mk. 4:24.
- (2) Deuteronomy. Mt. 4:4,7,10; Lk. 10:27; Jn. 8:17.

b. Books of the Prophets.

- (1) Isaiah. Lk. 4:17-21; Mt. 11:10; 21:13; Mk. 7:6; Jn. 6:45.

(2) ~~Jeremiah.~~ Jn. 6:45? TO PROPHETS AS WHOLE

(3) Zechariah. Mt. 26:31.

(4) Ezekiel. Jn. 7:38? (or 12:3)

(5) Daniel. Mt. 24:15.

(6) Hosea. Lk. 23:30.

c. Books of Poetry and History.

- (1) Psalms. Mt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10; Lk. 20:17; Jn. 6:31; 10:34.
- (2) Nehemiah. Jn. 6:31.