

Christ's View of the Authority
of Scripture: An Inductive Study
of the Four Gospels

ST 511 Dr. Kantzer
Spring Quarter, 1991
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Jesus Christ believed that His canonical scriptures were the authoritative word of God. The words of Jesus that concern this topic have been summarized into three broad categories: references to historical figures, quotations of scripture and scriptures that fulfill prophecy. These categories are general and are not meant to be mutually exclusive. There is some overlap in the categories and certainly someone may disagree with the classifications. Furthermore, some of Jesus' references do not fit neatly into these categories. Their purpose is summative, not doctrinal, to serve as points of reference for presenting the evidence. These categories will be examined and evaluated for their pertinence to the topic. Careful reading and reflection on this paper and the evidence it presents should show that Christ believed in the authority of scripture.

References to Historical Figures

The first category, references to historical figures, even when examined alone is quite convincing. Jesus made thirty references by name of seventeen Old Testament figures including, one queen, two kings, two patriarchs and seven prophets. Moses alone is mentioned ten times, Abraham three times and David twice. References to these figures span from Genesis chap. 6 through Zechariah. If the reference to Adam and Eve (Matt 19:4) is included then Jesus' historical reference begins at the first chapter of scripture.

Someone may argue that if Jesus believed scripture to be historically accurate, He should have mentioned more or perhaps

every O.T. figure. This argument is missing the point of the gospels entirely. Jesus did not lay down a doctrine of O.T. historical accuracy, that was not his intention. However, an examination of the people He did mention allows us to interpolate and draw the following conclusion. If Jesus believed that these seventeen people actually existed and given that these people directly or indirectly affected almost every other O.T. figure or event, it is more than safe to assume that Christ held to the historical accuracy of scripture beyond these historical figures to include all of His canonical scripture.¹

Quotation of Scripture

Next we will examine the second category: Jesus' quotation of scripture. This category can further be divided into two more categories: direct quotations and indirect quotations. Jesus directly quotes O.T. scripture thirty-four times from twelve different books. He indirectly quotes scripture forty-one times from fifteen books. All quotations together equal seventy-five references covering nineteen books (half of the Old Testament!). The same point should be stated as was made about the first category. Jesus did not intend to quote from every part of scripture. Had this been His intention, it is conceivable that He would have spent most of His ministry reading from and quoting Old Testament scripture. Furthermore, it is a safe conjecture to think that Jesus did extensively quote Scripture in three years

¹Further data for all three categories can be found on page seven of the inductive notes.

of ministry and it is just not recorded for us (i.e. from all of the time He spent in the Synagogue). However, that was not His nor the gospel writers' intention. Considering this fact, the amount of scripture that is quoted by Jesus is remarkable.

The amount of scripture that Jesus quoted is important, but even more important is how He used these scriptures (i.e. the context and purpose). We will examine His use of scripture as it related to ideas other than fulfillment of prophecy, which we will examine later.²

The first recorded words of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew is a good place to begin. Jesus is led into the wilderness and tempted by Satan. In each of three temptations, Jesus quotes a passage from Deuteronomy. First, Satan tempts Christ to turn stones into bread. Jesus begins His response as He does each time, by saying, "It is written" (Matt 4:4), and then continues, "Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." The context of this quotation from Deut. 8:3 is Moses reminding the Israelites how God fed them in the desert and that the word of the Lord and dependence on Yahweh are the primary objectives. We are to learn the same lesson from Jesus' words. Moreover, we can induce from these passages that Jesus validates this particular scripture and the events that surround it. Christ's responses to Satan's other two temptations carry essentially the same meaning. He quotes twice from Deut. 6, and again validates them as the word of the Lord.

²This is where the general categories especially overlap and classification becomes somewhat wooden, although hopefully helpful to the reader.

Another way Jesus uses scripture is for the prediction of future events. His disciples want to know what will be "the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3) Jesus quotes directly from Daniel (mentioning him by name) referring to the "abomination that causes desolation" (Matt. 24:15 - Dan. 9:27). He also quotes from Isaiah, saying, "the sun will be darkened" (Matt. 24:29 - Isa. 13:10). Also, when Jesus is before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, He is asked if He is the Christ, the Son of God. He quotes one of Caiaphas' own Hebrew scriptures to show that He is the Son of God (Matt. 26:64). Jesus quotes these scriptures assuming them to be a valid witness to future events and in the latter case, also validating His deity.

Jesus often quoted scripture as a source of authority during confrontation with the Pharisees. The Pharisees accused His disciples of unlawful activity on the Sabbath. Referring to the passage in 1 Sam. 21:16, Jesus begins by saying, "Haven't you read" (Matt. 12:3), then He goes on to describe how David lawfully performed the same task for which the disciples were being condemned. He justifies His disciples and accuses the Pharisees of not reading scripture, by a claim to scripture. Jesus says it again in v.5, "haven't you read," further strengthening His argument. Finally, He accuses the Pharisees of not understanding Scripture, when He says, "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice'." The Lord had declared these words to unrepentant Israel through the mouth of the prophet Hosea, and now the Son of God uses the same words against the unrepentant and merciless Pharisees.

*parallel but
hardly same*

Jesus again corrects the Pharisees, specifically their misunderstanding of the divorce laws from Deut. 24, by an appeal to scripture. First, He tells them that they don't understand the union of marriage that is so clearly set forth from the time of Adam and Eve. Then He corrects their interpretation of Deut. 24. Clearly, once again, Jesus appeals to scripture as the authoritative source for His answers.

Although a careful study of all of Jesus' use of O.T. quotations would be very profitable, space prohibits us from doing so at this time. We will, however, look at one more important example under this second general category. In Matt. 15, the Pharisees accuse the disciples of breaking the tradition of the elders. Jesus replies that the Pharisees are in the wrong not by breaking tradition but the command of God, "for the sake of [their] tradition" (v.3). The command of God that He is referring to is from Ex. 21:17, "Honor your father and mother." A key point to notice here is how he begins His statement, "for God said" (v.4). Jesus understands that this is a command from God and that scripture authoritatively bears witness to God's word.

Scriptures That Fulfill Prophecy

Finally, we will examine a third general category, Jesus' use of scripture that fulfills prophecy. There are several key passages in this category, therefore we will carefully observe the significance of each.

Very early in His ministry, Jesus returned to His home town

and was worshiping in the synagogue. He was handed the scroll of Isaiah to read from and He chose a certain passage, Isa. 61:1,2. After reading the scripture, He sat down and said to the people, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). This passage and the ones to follow shed new light on our topic. Clearly He believes in the authority of this passage from Isaiah, but He takes it one step further. He states that He, Himself is the fulfillment of the scripture. The Jews taught that these verses spoke of the coming Messiah, so there would have been no confusion as to what Jesus was claiming. Although they did not believe Him and eventually tried to kill Him, the significance for our study is great. Jesus used Old Testament scripture to prove that He was the Messiah, the anointed one of God.

Next, we take a leap from the beginning of Jesus' ministry to the very end. Jesus appeared to His disciples and was even eating with them. Since they still did not believe, He spoke these words, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44). He began to explain to them how the Old Testament scriptures (all of them!) fit together with what He taught and find their fulfillment in Him. There could scarcely be a more significant passage for our study. In one sentence, Jesus validates the authority of canonical scripture, claiming that its teaching is accurate and trustworthy.

In the gospel of John 5:16ff we find Jesus in another confrontation with unbelieving Jews. Jesus said that John the

Baptist (v.33), His Father (v.36) and scripture (v.39) all testify about Him. Even though the Jews religiously read scripture and many earnestly awaited the coming Messiah, it was their unbelief, not a lack of testimony that prevented them from understanding. Then He states, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me" (v.46). He claims that scripture and especially Moses' portion, the Torah (the Jews' most praised portion) testify about Him. The conclusion is obvious, if the scriptures testify about Him, they must be reliable and trustworthy witnesses. Jesus would not point us to a source that He knew to be false and unreliable. If the scriptures were merely the work of man, if they contained any error or if they were just a religious document, Jesus would not have placed such a high emphasis on them. However, since Jesus expounds their reliability, it impels us to do the same.

For our next example we will go back to the third chapter of John. We saw in the last example that Jesus claimed the scriptures testify about Him. In this example, Jesus told Nicodemus how this is done, and said to him, "You are Israel's teacher, and do you not understand these things?" (John 3:10) He goes on to say in v.14, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up." If the Israelites looked upon the bronze serpent lifted up on a pole they could be saved from the deadly snake bite. In the same way, whoever looks upon the crucified Christ lifted up on a cross will be saved. The incident with the Israelites was a type for the crucifixion and Jesus told Nicodemus how to interpret the

Actually the reverse is true. He is pointing to His own authority based on the witness of Scripture

not necessarily. The demons also testify

type. Now we can understand in a more concrete sense how the scriptures testify about Jesus. Once again, the underlying assumption is the reliability of scripture.

Our final example focuses on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. He declares in v.17, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Here is a definitive statement by Christ that speaks volumes to our topic. Jesus did not come to preach a brand new message. He did not come as one with his own brand of religion. He came as the perfect fulfillment of Old Testament scriptures. The Law regulated outward holiness but Jesus told his listeners that inward holiness is what is required. In the remainder of chapter five of Matthew, He refers to Old Testament laws, "Do not murder" (Ex. 20:13), "Do not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14), laws on divorce (Deut. 24) and others, in order to show us that He is preaching the same message, but with an internal focus. In this example, Jesus does not fulfill scripture in the strict sense, but in a way that restates or more fully explains the law. Jesus is placing His entire ministry on the line by a dependence on these scriptures. If they contain error, then He only came as a fulfillment of error. But if they are God's inspired, authoritative word, then Jesus' ministry is authoritative.

What do you say to a skeptic that doesn't believe in the authority or reliability of scripture? Well certainly a good starting point is where we have been today; Christ's view of the authority of canonical scripture. A true skeptic may always be a

skeptic. But for the sincere person who honestly seeks answers to this question, I believe the preceding pages, while although not an exhaustive treatment of the subject, represent Christ's view. In summary we can state that Christ held to the authority of historical figures and that these individuals and all of the scriptures that describe them are an authoritative and reliable testimony to Himself. He quoted them, believed them and depended on them, not only for His entire ministry, but for the definitive answer for who He is - the Christ, the anointed one from God. Surely these same scriptures deserve our trust.

*Good summary of
main ideas A-*

MATTHEW

Lk 4:4

It is written

4:4 "Man does not live on bread alone..." (Dt 8:3)

~~4:4~~~~Do not p~~It is also written

Lk 4:12

4:7 "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Dt 6:16)

Lk 4:8

It is written

4:10 "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only" (Dt 6:13)

*

5:17 "I have come .. to fulfill the [Law & the Prophets]" [Christ]

5:18,19 The Law will be fulfilled, The Law (commandments - OT) are to taught and practiced. [Christ]

5:21,22 Summary of "Do not murder" (Ex 20:13)

?

5:27-30 Summary of "Do not commit adultery" (Ex 20:14)

Lk 10:5ff

5:31,32 Summary of divorce laws (Deut 24:1)

?

5:33-37 Summary of Oaths (Nu. 30:2, Dt 23:21)

5:38-42 Summary of "eye for eye" (Ex. 21:24, Law 24:20, Deut 19:21)

5:43,45 Summary of "Love your neighbor" (Lev. 19:8)

Lk 12:27

6:29

Reference to "Solomon in all his splendor" (1K1. 4-7)

Lk 5:14

8:4

"offer the gift Moses commanded" (Lev. 14:2-32)

8:11 Mentions, "Abraham, Isaac & Jacob"

9:13 "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (Hos. 6:6)

10:15 Reference to "Sodom and Gomorrah"

10:36 "a mans enemies will be the members of his own household (Mic. 7:6)"

LK 7:27

11:10 I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way before you (Mal. 3:1) [John the Baptist]

MK 2:25

LK 6:13 12:3ff Reference to David eating the consecrated bread (1 Sam 21:6) Have not yet read

12:7 "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (Hos. 6:6)

LK 11:29ff

12:40⁴⁷ Reference to Jonah & story [Christ] also Solomon & Queen of the South (1 Ki 10:1 Jonah 1:17)

13:13 "Thash seeing, they do not see..." (Deut 29:4)

MK 4:12

LK 8:10 13:14,15 "You will be ever hearing..." (Isa 6:9,10) Fulfilled prophecy of [unbelievers?] Isaiah

15:4 "Honor your father & mother..." (Ex 21:17 Lev. 20:9) For God said

MK 9:6

15:8 "These people honor me with their lips..." (Isa 29:13) Isaiah prophesied [unbelievers?]

16:4 "the sign of Jonah"

17:11

~~17:11~~ "Elijah comes" (Mal 4:5,6) "Elijah has already come" [John the Baptist]

19:4 "the Creator made them male and female" (Gen. 1:27) ^{Have you read}

19:8 "Moses permitted you to divorce his wife" (Dt 24:1-4)

Lk 18:18 Mk 10:17ff

19:18 Obey the commandments ^{Follow the Law} (Deut 5:16-20, Ex 20:12-16 (Lv. 19:8))

Mk 11:17 Lk 19:46

21:13 "It is written, my house will be called..." (Isa 56:7, Jer 7:11)

21:16 "Have you never read, from the lips of children..." (Ps 8:2)

Mk 12:10

21:12 "Have you never read, the stone the builders rejected..." (Ps 118:22, 23) ^[Christ]

Mk 12:26 Lk 20:17

22:32 "Have you not read, I am the God of Abraham..." (Ex. 3:6)

22:37 Greatest commandment: "Love the Lord your God..." (Deut 6:5)

Mk 12:36 Lk 20:42

22:43ff David speaking, "The Lord said to my Lord..." (Ps 110:1)

23:23 ~~Jesus~~ Reference to tithing (Lev. 27:30)

Lk 11:31

23:35 Reference to Abel's murder (Gen. 4:8)

Lk 11:31

23:35 Reference to Zechariah (Zec 1:1)

Lk 13:35

23:39 "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Ps 118:26) ^[Christ]

Mk 13:14

24:15 "abomination that causes desolation..." through Daniel (Dan. 9:27, 11:31)

Mk 13:24

24:29 "the Sun will be darkened..." (Isa. 13:10, 34:4)

Matthew

4.

Mt 14:20
26:33

"just as it is written, the one who has dipped his hand" (Ps. 41:9)
[Judas]

Mt 14:27
26:31

"It is written, I will strike the shepherd..." (Zech. 13:7)
[Christ-disciples]

Mt 14:62

26:64 Son of Man... coming on the clouds (Dan. 7:13)

Mt 15:34

27:46 "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1)

MARK

1:44 "offer sacrifices that Moses commanded you" (Lev. 17:1-32)

2:27 Sabbath made for man (forest) (Ex. 23:12)

9:48 "their warren does not die and the fire is not quenched" (Isa. 66:24)

13:27 "gather his elect from the far winds" (Zech. 2:6)

LUKE

4:18,19 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me..." (Isa. 61:1,2)

* 4:21 "this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" [Christ]

4:25 "many widows in Israel in Elijah's time" (1 King 17:1, 18:1)

4:27 "many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha" (2 King 5:1-14)

9:41 "Unbelieving and perverse generation" (Dt. 32:5)

LUKE

10:20 "your names are written in heaven" (Ps 69:28, Rom. 12:1)

10:26ff do commandment: "love the Lord your God..." (Dt. 6:5 (Lev 19:18))

12:53 "mother against daughter..." (Mic. 7:6)

16:31 "If they do not listen to Moses & the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

17:27 Reference to Noah

17:28 Reference to Lot (Gen 19:1-28)

17:32 "Remember Lot's wife!" (Gen. 19:26)

19:43 "your enemies will build an embankment against you (ie Jerusalem)" (Jer. 6:6)

mt 24 mk 13
21:11 "Nation will rise up against nation..." (Isa 29:6, Joel 2:30)

23:30 "they will say to the mountains, fall on us..." (Isa. 10:8)

* 24:44 "everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in [Christ] the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Ps 2, 22, 69, 72)

JOHN

* 3:14 "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert" (Numb. 21:8, 9) [Christ]

* 5:39 "These are the scriptures that testify about me" [Christ]

Terra

6.

* 5:46 "Moses... work about me!" [Christ] (Gen. 3:15)

6:32 "Jesus ventures manna bread from heaven as coming (Moses) from the Father"

6:47 "You forefathers ate manna in the desert..!"

7:19 "Has not Moses given you the Law?"

7:22 "Moses gave you circumcision (from the patriarchs)" (Gen. 12:3 Gen. 17:10-14)

8:58 "Before Abraham was born, I am" (Ex 3:14) [Christ]

10:11 "I am the good shepherd" (Ezek 34:11-16)

10:34 "Is it not written in your Law..." (Ps. 82:6)

* "Scripture cannot be broken" [Christ]

12:8 "You will always have the poor among you" (Dt. 15:11)

13:18 "He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me" (Ps 41:9)

* "to fulfill the Scripture" [Judas]

* 15:25 "This is to fulfill what is written in their law: They hated me without reason" (Ps 35:19 69:4) [Christ]

TOTAL	Fulfil	Direct Quotes	Historical Ref. (people/places)
78	20 40 verses	28 verses	31 verse

Is it written / Haven't you read etc.

17

people: ~~Solomon II, Moses I, Abraham I, Isaac, Jacob~~
~~David, Jonah II, Isaiah II, Elijah~~
~~Queen of Saba~~

Closer Look: MATT 4 - Temptation
 Mt 24: 44 Moses Prophet Priests

places: Sodom, Gomerah

			Direct	Indirect
people:	Solomon II.	Books Quoted:	Deut. IIII	IIII I
mentioned	Moses IIII IIII	Revised	Hosea IIII	
(17)	Abraham IIII	(19)	Micah I	I
33x	Isaac I	Books 12-15	Mal. I	
	David II	Scripture 34-41	Isaiah IIII I	I
	Jonah II	Queen I	Ex. II	IIII
	Isaiah II	prophets 7	Lev. II	IIII
	Queen of Saba I	kings 2	Psa. IIII IIII	II
	Elijah II	patriarchs 2	Jerem. I	I
	Jacob I		Daniel II	I
	Abel I		Zeck I	II
	Zeckanah I		Num. I	I
	Daniel I		I kings / II kings	IIII
	Elisha I		I Sam.	I
	Noah I		Jonah	I
	Lot I		Gen	II IIII
	Lot's wife I		Joel	I
			Ezekiel	I

implied
 Ezekiel
 much
 Hosea
 Isaiah
 Joel

Quotation categories

- Temptation (Matt 4)
- Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5)
- prediction of future events (Mt 24:15, Mt 24:29, Mt 26:64
Lk 22:30)
- Appeals to authority (Mt 4, 12:3, 12:7, 15:4, 19:4, ~~20:22~~
21:13, 22:32, 22:37)

graphing

Lk 4:18 /

Lk ~~20~~ 24:44 /

Jn. 5:39 /

~~Jn. 1:14~~ Jn. 3:14 /

Matt 5