

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

11. "Can this be the son of David?"
12. ". . . neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal *Him*."
13. "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."
14. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; . . ."
15. ". . . but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him . . ."
16. ". . . and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first."
17. "Behold, my mother and my brethren!"
18. "He that is not with me is against me . . ."
19. "A bruised reed shall he not break and smoking flax shall he not quench till he send forth judgment unto victory."

JESUS' WITNESS TO OLD TESTAMENT INSPIRATION

By John Ransom

Is the Old Testament inspired of God? Is it scientifically and historically accurate? Is it consistent with itself, not contradicting itself in various places? These things, and more, will in this paper constitute inspiration. That is, the Old Testament Scripture is "God-breathed" in the original copy and was fully inspired and without error or contradiction.

Many faithful believers have serious doubts about the Old Testament, even some who have a firm faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, in this study we will approach such a group, assuming here the deity of Jesus Christ, that He is God's Son. We will turn to Him who is God in the flesh for an evaluation of Old Testament Scripture. While we value the studies of men in higher and lower criticism and external and internal evidence, we will, as Christians, look at these Jewish Scriptures through the eyes of Him who is our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

As Harry Rimmer reminds us (*Internal Evidence of Inspiration*, 149):

For if the Lord Jesus Christ is in truth and fact the Son of God as He claims to be, He is then the highest authority on any subject of which He speaks. . . . He could and does speak from the standpoint of omniscience . . . He can speak from the source of divine wisdom, knowing that even the future cannot alter His teachings. . . . So when we study the testimony of the Saviour concerning the nature and source

CHAPTER TWELVE

of the text of the Bible, we are consulting the final and absolute witness. His statements should settle the question once and for all.

It seems wise at this point to plunge immediately into Jesus' use and opinion of the Old Testament, these being proofs of its inspiration. We notice:

I. HIS WHOLE LIFE'S COMPLETE SATURATION WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT.

The things He says are frequently couched in the language of the Old Testament. H. S. Miller (*General Biblical Introduction*, 53) lists a great many of these: "The abomination of desolation" (Mt. 24:15 = Daniel 12:11); "Great tribulation such as hath not been since the beginning" (Mt. 24:21 = Daniel 12:1); "The blood of the covenant" (Mark 14:24 = Exodus 24:8); "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful" (Mt. 26:38 = Ps. 42:6, 12; 43:5); "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44, 46, 48 = Isaiah 66:24); "Blessed is he that cometh" (Mt. 23:39 = Psalms 118:26); "Into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46 = Psalms 31:5); "Say to the mountains" (Luke 23:30 = Hosea 10:8); and many more. Jesus' whole life was bound up in Old Testament references. He began His earthly ministry with "It is written" (Mt. 4:4, 7, 10) and ended it in the same manner. (Luke 24:46)

II. HIS ACCEPTANCE AND FULFILMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES TO HIMSELF.

On one occasion Jesus said in reference to the Old Testament, "Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; *and these are they that bear witness of me.*" (John 5:39) Then, almost immediately, He went ahead to say in vv. 46, 47: "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writing, how shall ye believe my words?" Again He acknowledges and accepts the prophetic voice of the whole Old Testament in this sweeping statement, "These are my words which I spoke unto you, while I was with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms, concerning me." (Luke 24:44) No statement could be more clear than this as to His absolute assurance of Scripture, nor could any opportunity be more suitable to express doubt, had there been any.

The Gospel writers have faithfully recorded for us event after event in Jesus' life that fulfilled Scripture. This begins with His

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

birth (Mt. 1:22, 23) and continues throughout His life (Mt. 2:5, 6, 15, 17, 18, 23; 4:13-17; 8:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:31, 54, 56; 27:9, 10, 46) up to the very time of the crucifixion (John 19:24, 28, 35-37). This demonstrates clearly how "His whole life was a fulfilment of Scripture." (Miller, *op cit.*, 54. However, see the special study "*How Does Matthew Use the Prophecies?*" Vol. I, p. 81ff., HEF)

An example of His own application of prophecy to Himself may be found in Mt. 21:42 where He foretells His own rejection as recorded in Psalms 118:22, 23. Rimmer (*op cit.*, 176-178) notes that "He had no doubt in His own mind about the certainty of the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning Himself, and history certainly vindicated His reliance upon the infallibility of the written word." In John 13:18 He quotes Psalm 41:9 of His betrayal by Judas. In Luke 22:37 He quotes from Isaiah 53:12, referring these words to His own death. In Mt. 12:40, 41 He takes the account of Jonah and makes it a figure of His own death and resurrection.

Notice also His acceptance of prophecies other than those concerning Himself. Rimmer (p. 165) comments:

In Matt. 15 (7-9) He definitely declared that Isaiah spoke of and to the people of Christ's time. That is to say, Isaiah had anticipated by seven centuries the social and religious conditions of the nation of Israel and described them in terms that were historically fulfilled. Since men cannot foretell the future, and since prophecy is the sphere of omniscience, His conclusion is that Isaiah was borne along by the spirit of God in such passages.

(While Rimmer's conclusion is fundamentally correct, his choice of Matt. 15:7-9 as a specific case in point is unfortunate or, at best, inconclusive. See the comments on that passage, HEF)

Who would dare say, after examination of Christ's knowledge, use and application of prophecy, that He did not have explicit faith in these Holy Scriptures?

III. HIS STRESS ON OTHERS' KNOWING AND FOLLOWING THE OLD TESTAMENT.

If one would very highly recommend to you a doctor, lawyer, book or certain action, you could conclude that that person were either trying to deceive you, or else that he had strong faith in what he recommended. Such is true of Jesus, and we are convinced that He was not a deceiver! In His omniscience, Jesus plainly trusted the Scriptures and strongly recommended them to His listeners. In the

CHAPTER TWELVE

Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:17-20) Jesus shows the extreme importance He attaches not only to a knowledge of the Word, but also to the practice of teaching it to others. In fact, those who follow and teach the Scriptures "shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven," while those who disobey and teach others to disobey "shall be called least."

On four occasions, as Miller (*op cit.*, 53) notes, "He expressed surprise that the Jews had so carelessly read their God-given Scriptures. (Matt. 19:4, 5; 21:16, 42; 22:31, 32; Mark 12:26; from Genesis 1:27; 2:24; 5:2; Psalm 8:2; 118:22, 23; Exodus 3:6)" What a biting rebuke it must also have been to the Pharisees, who prided themselves on their exact knowledge of the Word, when He said to them in response to their ignorance on some point, "Have ye not read the Scriptures?" (Mark 12:10; Matt. 21:16, 42)

His real attitude toward the Old Testament Scripture and particularly its relation to man's behaviour is revealed when He says, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures" (Matt. 22:29). In this He alludes to the fact that a basis for error in spiritual matters is ignorance of Scripture. Also implied in this is the implicit conclusion that the Scriptures themselves do not err.

Yes, this was the guide to which Jesus continually pointed His listeners. Would our Lord purposely lead them to a faulty, erring production when He Himself had the Word of Life? *I believe not!*

IV. HIS COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE OF ITS HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS.

Many critics have at least denied the historical records of the Old Testament, but Jesus' view of the inspiration of the Old Testament was, as we stated at the outset, an assumption of the full, or plenary, inspiration of that document and this included its historical accounts.

This is demonstrated when He, many times almost casually, and yet with utmost assurance, referred to these events. Notice Matt. 12:42 where Jesus tells of the visit to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba. When He does this, the whole weight of His authority is cast behind the authenticity of I Kings 10 and II Chronicles 9. Almost in passing (Luke 4:25-27), He confirms the accounts of the widow of Zarephath to whom Elisha was sent and the cleansing of Naaman the Syrian leper. In these last two illustrations, as Rimmer points out (*op cit.*, 169-172), Jesus upheld with His authority some of the greatest (and most often criticized) miracles of the Old Testament.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

This is so likewise in John 3:14 where He compares Himself to the bronze serpent which Moses lifted up. Again Rimmer notes that:

Here He approves another Old Testament miraculous event without the slightest intimation that it is unhistorical and untrue. In fact, He found nothing incredible in the fact that God could do such marvels.

Our Lord also established some of His most basic teaching on the truthfulness of these Old Testament accounts. In John 6:32, 49 He makes certain reference to the feeding of the children of Israel in the wilderness. "Upon the credibility of this section of the Old Testament text, Jesus Christ bases His entire ministry and offers salvation to men."—Rimmer (172). (However, Rimmer overstates his case here. Perhaps he should have affirmed that the Lord based His *argument* about His ministry upon universally believed facts of the OT passage, not the ministry itself upon the credibility. HEF) Recorded in Mark 12:26 are Jesus' remarks concerning Moses and the burning bush. Jesus used this historical event to propel His teaching on immortality to the unbelieving Sadducees, and, ultimately, to the whole world. In Matt. 12:3, during an argument with the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath, Jesus cites the episode of David, recorded in I Samuel 21:6. Rimmer notes (173): "Upon the historicity of this event He bases His reasoning concerning the superiority of man over the day of rest." Still another example of this type of unshakable confidence in the historical accounts of the Old Testament is found in Matt. 19:4-9. Here Jesus gives His teaching concerning the sanctity of marriage, referring to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, thereby accepting and confirming in one sweeping statement the creation by God, the origin of marriage and the existence, words and work of Moses."

To obtain a broad view of what Jesus thought of the historical accounts in Jewish Scripture, we might think of it in the following way: Jesus believed in Noah and the flood (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26, 27); in the accounts of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10:15); and in Lot and his wife fleeing from the city of Sodom (Luke 17:28-32); in the call of Moses at the bush (Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37); and that David really ate the shewbread (Matt. 12:3-5; cf. I Samuel 21). Our Lord believed that God created man and established marriage (Matt. 19:4-6), that Solomon reigned as a glorious, majestic King (Matt. 6:29) and that the Queen of Sheba came to visit him (Matt. 12:42). He is certain of the great miracle wrought for the Gentile widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17:10-16) and the healing of Naaman

CHAPTER TWELVE

the leper (Luke 4:25-27) as well as the lifting up of the bronze serpent in the wilderness by Moses that the people might be healed (John 3:14). Jesus showed no doubt whatsoever that Israel actually wandered in the wilderness and was miraculously fed *mana* from heaven (John 6:32, 49). He showed no doubt that righteous Abel and Zachariah were really slain as recorded (Luke 11:51; Matt. 23:35); or that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were real persons (Matt. 22:31, 32). He believed that Moses lived and spoke (Mark 7:10; 12:19, 26); that David was a divinely inspired writer (Mark 12:36; Luke 20:41-44); that Daniel was a prophet (Matt. 24:15); and that Jonah actually spent three days and nights in the fish's belly (Matt. 12:39, 40; 16:4).

When my Lord held such a view of the historical accounts of the Old Testament, how can I doubt or how can I have any less confidence in them than He? Surely His testimony must be of prime importance to me!

V. HIS APPEAL TO IT IN EVERY SITUATION.

Jesus' own words were of great power and authority, and He Himself recognized this. In Mark 13:31 He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," and again in John 6:63, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Furthermore, He affirmed that these words were not His but the words of the Father who sent Him. Yet was it to His own word that He turned in every situation? No! Whether Jesus is attacked or questioned on the subject of the Sabbath or vows, marriage or the resurrection, His answer is usually Scripture, and an abundance of it. The Old Testament Scripture is the authority in all of these controversial matters. He pierces right through their ancient traditions and distorted opinions with His accurate and to-the-point references. So teaches Pierre Ch. Marcel (*Revelation and the Bible*, 122-124) To this Broomall (*Biblical Criticism*, 36) adds:

Christ held the Old Testament as a final authority dealing with matters of faith and conduct. He appealed to it frequently with His characteristic "It is written . . ." as if to say, "God has spoken in His Word and that settles it!" (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). He even cited examples out of the Old Testament as authoritative for His own conduct (Mark 2:25ff.). Its statements about legal matters were considered authoritative (John 8:17), and its predictions concerning Him were looked upon as true and of supreme authority in deciding His messianic claims (Luke 24:25-27, 44ff., John 5:45ff.). The voices

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

of Moses and the prophets were considered as authoritative in matters of the soul's destiny (Luke 16:29-31). Christ believed that if a principle of truth were taught in the Old Testament, there was no need to appeal to a higher authority.

VI. HIS OBVIOUS STATEMENTS AS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT BEING FROM GOD, HENCE, GOD'S WORD.

This is one of Jesus' most important assertions of Old Testament inspiration. Here He plainly reveals God as the source of the Word and also indicates the nature of that inspiration: "Not *one jot or tittle* shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Broomall (*op cit.*, 35, 36) comments:

In Matt. 4:4 Christ cites Deuteronomy 8:3 ("Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God") in His reply to Satan's temptations. Here Christ gives His approval to the belief that the Old Testament comes "out of the mouth of God." (cf. Hebrews 1:1 . . . In citing Psalm 110:1 Christ affirms that David spoke that verse "in the Spirit" (Matt. 22:43; cf. II Samuel 23:2; Rev. 1:10).

Rimmer (*op cit.*, 164) reminds us that:

In Mark 7:8-13 there is a typical instance containing a direct statement of Jesus as to the authority of the Scriptures. In condemning the Pharisees on the ground that they had left the commandment of God and retained the traditions of man, He said to them, "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own traditions." Thereupon He quoted the words of Moses as they are found in Exodus 20 and 21; Deut. 5 and Leviticus 20. At the conclusion, He says that by their conduct they *make void the word of God by their traditions*. It does not take an analytical mind to notice that when Jesus quotes words by the pen of Moses, He stated that these are the words of God and should be obeyed.

Carl F. H. Henry ("Inspiration", *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, 278) notes that

In John 10:34ff., Jesus singles out an obscure passage in the Psalms ("Ye are gods," Psalm 82:6) to reinforce the point that the Scriptures cannot be broken."

He then very clearly labels this as *the word of God* delivered to men.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Warfield ("Inspiration," *ISBE*, 1476, 1477) joins the following illustration:

The confidence with which Jesus rested on Scripture, in its every declaration, is further illustrated in a passage like Matt. 19:4. Certain Pharisees had come to Him with a question on divorce and He met them thus: "Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh . . . What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." "*He who made them . . . said.*" "What therefore *God* hath joined together." Yet this passage does not give us a saying of God recorded in Scripture, but just the words of Scripture itself, and can be treated as a declaration of God's only on the hypothesis that all scripture is a declaration of God's.

All of this seems to sum up Christ's positive and unequivocal stand on the inspiration of the Old Testament. Nothing could be clearer and more to the point than these many references (and many besides) that plainly attribute the Old Testament to God Himself and to His Spirit. As men and women believing in the Christ, we too will view the Old Testament as being delivered unto men by the mouth of God through faithful witnesses.

Perhaps the one basic question still in the mind of the honest inquirer for truth is: "Did Jesus' endorsement of the Old Testament include *all* the Old Testament, or only certain portions of it?" This brings us to Jesus' seventh proof of Old Testament inspiration:

VII. HIS ENDORSEMENT OF THE COMPLETE OLD TESTAMENT.

H. S. Miller (*op cit.*, 38, 44) informs us that the Jews divided the canon of the Old Testament into three main sections: the law, prophets and writings (or Psalms). Jesus quoted from and made definite reference to each of these by name. Miller continues:

"All this" (the events thus far in this chapter) "was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled" (Matt. 26:56; Mark 14:49). Hence, *the prophets* are Scripture and must be fulfilled. Jesus expounded "in all the Scriptures, *beginning at Moses and all the prophets*, the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). Hence the . . . first two sections are Scripture and the theme is Jesus. (Next) the heart

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

of the travelers burned within them as He opened to them the Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 32)

Then a little later as Jesus appeared to them He said, "These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the *law of Moses* and in *the prophets*, and in *the Psalms* concerning me." (Luke 24:44) Here in this sweeping statement Jesus includes all of the Old Testament, each of the three sections are clearly named as if this were exactly His intent, i.e. to point out the unity and authority of the complete Old Testament both to His first century disciples and to us.

In addition to this, Miller (*op cit.*, 52) notes that "He covered and endorsed the entire Old Testament in one statement, "from the blood of righteous Abel (Gen. 4:1-10) unto the blood of Zachariah' (II Chron. 24:20, 21), or from Genesis to Chronicles, just as we would say 'from Genesis to Malachi' (Matt. 23:35)"

Jesus' whole view of the inspiration of the Old Testament was strongly opposed to the idea that only parts of the Bible are infallible and trustworthy. Edward Young (*Thy Word is Truth*, 48) argues that:

It is not only in specific teaching or in great doctrines that the Scriptures cannot be broken. Rather, in all parts, in its very entirety, the Bible, if we are to accept its witness to itself, is utterly infallible. It is not only that each book given the name of Scripture is infallible, but, more than that, the content of each such book is itself Scripture, the Word of God written and, hence, infallible, free entirely from the errors which adhere to mere human compositions. Not alone to moral and ethical truths, but to all statements of fact this inspiration extends. That inspiration which the Bible claims for itself is one that is full; it is plenary inspiration. As our Lord said, in giving expression to their very doctrine, "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." (Matt. 5:17, 18).

To this Rimmer (*op cit.*, 168) adds: "The statement that the fulfillment of the Old Testament was more certain than the continuance of the physical creation, lifts those writings so high above human literary productions that they can be considered only as supernatural in their origin."

CHAPTER TWELVE

As we examine the Old and New Testaments and additional historical evidence, it may be seen that the majority of the people in Jesus' day accepted the Old Testament Scriptures that we now have as in a real and true sense "God-breathed." Jesus and His followers were certainly no exception to this. James Orr (*Revelation and Inspiration*, 182) observes that while "modern writers may question whether the view of Jesus and His apostles was a correct one, . . . they will not question that the view was there." This leads us to Rimmer's statement of the conclusion (*op cit.*, 179): "The only alternative to the acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God is to discredit the person of Christ and discount His testimony." And, quoting Westcott, Miller (*op cit.*, 54) says,

We must either accept the doctrine of plenary inspiration . . . or deny the veracity of the evangelists. If our Lord's words are accurately recorded, or even if their general tenor is expressed in one of the gospels, the Bible is indeed the *Word of God* in the fullest spiritual sense . . .

It also seems well to note, in the midst of all His positive statements of acceptance (of the Old Testament), Broomall (*op cit.*, 36) notes the negative fact that Christ nowhere insinuates that the Old Testament is erroneous in any detail. . . . There is not the slightest suggestion that it is in need of correction. Even His famous 'but I say unto you' as found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:22, etc.) is not to be interpreted as a correction of the former revelation, but is to be understood as a correction of Jewish misunderstanding of the Old Testament teaching." (While not quarrelling with Broomall's basic conclusion, we may construe Jesus' statements of authority in another fashion, i.e., rather than the mere correction of Jewish misunderstanding and rather than a simple correction of former revelation, He stands fully in agreement that the former revelation came from God but upon His own authority raises the standard to perfection itself. See my notes on Mt. 5:20, "*Jesus' Purpose*," Vol. I, 255ff. HEF)

Yes, Jesus affirmed that, although heaven and earth would pass away, His words would endure (Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33). Yet to what did He turn in His hour of dire temptation? the Old Testament. Or in teaching? Or correction? To the Old Testament. When His own word was everlasting, would our Lord turn to anything lacking these same great God-given powers? I think not!

Rimmer (*op cit.*, 178) reminds us that:

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Whether Christ used (the Old Testament) for illustration, argument, in warning, or as prophecy fulfilled in Himself, He handled the ancient record with a holy reverence in the belief that it was the Word of God.

May we gain and foster such a use and reverence for the Word ourselves.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Broomall, Wick. *Biblical Criticism*, Grand Rapids, 1957.
- Henry, Carl F. H. Article: "Inspiration," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, Grand Rapids, 1960.
- Marcel, Pierre Ch. "Our Lord's Use of Scripture," *Revelation and the Bible*, Grand Rapids, 1960.
- Miller, H. S. *General Biblical Introduction*, New York, 1958.
- Orr, James. *Revelation and Inspiration*, New York, 1910.
- Rimmer, Harry. *Internal Evidence of Inspiration*, Grand Rapids, 1946.
- Symposium by the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary. *The Infallible Word*. Grand Rapids, 1953.
- Tasker, R. V. G. *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, New York, 1954.
- Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Chicago, 1957.
- Von Allmen, J. J. *A Companion to the Bible*, New York, 1958.
- Warfield, Benjamin B. "Inspiration," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1929.
- Young, Edward J. *Thy Word Is Truth*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1960.