

Essay

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MATTHEW 4:4

INTRODUCTION

Satan tempted the Lord Jesus Christ early in His ministry (Mt. 4:1-11).¹ The Lord answered the tempter with three references from Deuteronomy (8:3, 6:16, and 6:13, respectively). The first answer is significant. He stated, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (v. 4, cited from Dt. 8:3).² This response summarizes the Lord’s bibliology. 1) He affirmed the doctrine of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the autographa by stating the source of Scripture—“proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” 2) He affirmed the authority of the written Scripture, and consequently its infallibility and inerrancy, by upholding it as a standard by which “Man shall live.” 3) He affirmed the availability of Scripture since He declared His personal access and implied mankind’s general access to God’s Words—“by every word.” 4) He affirmed the doctrine of the verbal, plenary preservation of Scripture by the expression “It is written.” The perfect tense, which He utilized, expresses a completed action with a resulting state of being. The result of the action continues from the past through the present and into the future. In effect, the Lord said “It was written and still is written.” The living Word (Christ) validated His written Words since He believed He had the verbal, plenary Old Testament (OT) Words intact in His day. The purpose of this chapter is to examine in detail the Lord’s claims about the full and complete text of the Hebrew OT available in His day.

EXEGESIS

Inspiration—“Proceedeth Out of the Mouth of God”

The participle behind proceedeth is ἐκπορευομένῳ and the infinitive means “to go out.” The reference to the mouth (στόματος) indicates that God, who is Spirit, nevertheless gave man Words that could be inscripturated. God, who was the author of the original language (Gen. 1:3), and also of the various languages (Gen. 11:7), has revealed Himself through the medium of oral and written language (cf. Ex. 20:1 ff; Jer.

¹Cf. Mk. 1:12-13 and Lk 4:1-13.

²Although the Lord Jesus could have rebuked Satan with the power of His own personal authority (cf. Mt. 16:23), Christ submitted His personal authority to the written Scripture, and chose rather to rebuke His chief adversary with the highest authority—the written Words of God (Psm. 138:2).

36:4).³ The Lord God is the source for the canonical autographa and decreed to put His self-revelation in the form of Words (II Pet. 1:20-21). He gave His divine Words through human language for the eternal benefit of mankind as Paul stated, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Authority—“Man Shall Live”

Israel needed to learn the wilderness lesson of hunger and that through her obedience the Lord would supply the nation’s physical and spiritual food (Dt. 8:1-3). The Lord cited this passage to show how He has provided every daily need including not only manna for Israel but also His Words for all mankind.⁴ The Bible is the rulebook⁵ by which man should live and for which man will give an account to God. It tells how man may be justified before God, stating “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).⁶ Since the Scripture “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16), it follows that man should live in light of Scriptures’ injunctions. According to Psm. 119:98-100, God’s Words make the believer wiser than his enemies, his teachers (even text critics) and the ancients. Scripture is necessary for salvation (1 Pet. 1:23-25) and sanctification (Jn. 17:17). The canonically inscripturated words of the Father and the Son constitute the standard by which man must live. The Lord stated “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (Jn. 12:48).

Availability—“By Every Word”

The Lord gave the *Torah* to the Jewish Nation through Moses so that she would be prepared to enter into Canaan (Dt. 1:1). Moses required the *Torah* to be placed in the Ark of the Covenant for future generations (Dt. 31:24-30). Centuries later Ezra read the *Torah* to the Jews in their new place of worship in Jerusalem (Neh. 8:1-9). There is no question that the Jewish scribes preserved the OT Scripture through God’s ordained place of worship, either the Tabernacle or the Temple. God committed unto the Jews the oracles (τὰ λόγια) of God as their blessed privilege (Rom. 3:1-2). That the Jews were the custodians of the inscripturated divine utterances in their place of worship is non-controversial. Scripture adduces that they preserved and dispersed the Lord’s Words for general availability as well: “For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach

³Since God spoke in words, the original Hebrew of the OT Scriptures must have had consonants and vowels (cf. Dt. 27:8). Consonants without vowels are not words and cannot be pronounced. Moses wrote the original words, including vowels (Dt. 31:24), apparently Ezra preserved the consonants and vowels (Neh. 8:8), and the Masoretes standardized the Hebrew OT text including the original consonants and vowel pointings.

⁴Jesus’ food was obedience to God, as He stated, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work” (Jn. 4:34).

⁵“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psm 119:105; cf. Prov. 6:23).

⁶Cf. Rom. 3:23-25; 5:9-10.

him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day ” (Acts 15:21; cf. also Josh. 8:30-35).

The local New Testament (NT) church was and is the only custodian of the NT Canon and Text of the Canon. The Lord promised to use His people in His institution to preserve His Words, stating:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Mt. 28:19-20).

The Lord Jesus Christ gave His Great Commission to His churches to disciple all nations, by going worldwide, and immersing and instructing the believers. The Great Commission is the divine mandate to plant immersionist churches worldwide. Furthermore, the leadership of the churches must teach the members to observe (τηρεῖν literally “to guard”) all things the Lord commanded (cf. Eph. 4:11-16). Ultimately, the “all things” would include the OT and NT Scriptures. Christ’s Great Commission gives the sole responsibility of guarding the Bible Canon and Words of the Canon to the local NT church.⁷ The NT Canon and Words therein were written to local churches and local church members.

Paul confirmed that the local church has the sole responsibility to preserve the truth. He stated, “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). The apostle identified the house of God as the church of the living God, the church that has bishops and deacons (vv. 1-13). Presumably, Paul alluded to the great Temple of Diana (cf. Acts 19:24 ff.), which had massive architectural pillars and foundations, to make his analogy with the local church at Ephesus. Just as the Temple of Diana was a physical depository for the wealth of the Artemesian cult, the Ephesian church was the depository for the Lord’s spiritual wealth—the truth. The local churches initially and continually recognized and preserved the NT Canon and the Words of the NT Canon, which God originally determined. History has corroborated the Scriptural truth that God preserved His Words through the Lord’s assemblies. The Lord Jesus preserved His Words which were manifested in the manuscripts and translations used by His churches, starting of course with the NT churches. The Apostolic churches used the Received Text (cf. Jn. 17:8 *et al*), which text the Syrian (1st century), Italic (2nd century), Gallic (2nd century), Celtic (3rd century), Gothic (4th century), Waldensian (5th–16th centuries), Albigensian (13th century), Anabaptist (16th century) and Baptist (17th–21st centuries) churches preserved, either by translating or by promulgating the received translation over the past two thousand years.⁸ The Lord God’s institution of the local church has kept the Words of His Received Bible just as He promised and as history has corroborated.

⁷This responsibility was not given to the Roman Catholic Church, Protestantism, Bible societies, or para-church organizations.

⁸By faith one must believe that all legitimate extant manuscript readings and translations have been influenced by local NT churches. History cannot disprove this credo.

Preservation—“It Is Written”

The passage at hand utilizes the expression “it is written” (Γέγραπται) four times (vv. 4, 6, 7, 10).⁹ The Lord submitted Himself to the written OT Scripture in response to Satan’s temptations and claimed the preservation of three passages (Dt. 8:3, 6:16, and 6:13) for His defense (cf. Eph. 6:17). Satan was forced to submit himself to the written Scripture and even declared the preservation of Psm. 91:11-12 (v. 6) with “it is written.” The Greek word Γέγραπται is 3ms perfect indicative passive of γράφω meaning “it was, still is and will continue to remain written.”¹⁰ Christ declared that the Hebrew text of Dt. 8:3,

פִּי לֹא עַל-הַלֶּחֶם לְבַדּוֹ יַחְיֶה הָאָדָם כִּי עַל-כָּל-מוֹצֵא
פִּי יִחְיֶה יַחְיֶה הָאָדָם:

(“not by bread alone shall man live, but by all [words] proceeding out of the mouth of Jehovah”) was still intact, including the consonants and vowels, up unto His day. There are at least three Biblical arguments that defend the position that the Lord always used the Hebrew text and not the Greek *LXX*. 1) The Lord referred to jots and tittles that make up the Hebrew language, not the Greek language (Mt. 5:17-18). 2) The Lord referred to the three-fold division of the *Tanak*, not the *LXX*, which included the *Torah* (law), the *Nabim* (prophets), and the *Kethubim* (writings), on several occasions (cf. Lk. 24:44). 3) The Lord referred to the first and last books of the *Tanak* (Lk. 11:50-51), indicating the brutal deaths of the prophets from Abel (Gen. 4: 8) to Zacharias (2 Chron. 24:20-22). Although the Lord cited precisely the Hebrew of Mt. 4:4, it is clear upon close examination of Dt. 8:3, Christ did not quote the *LXX* since at least two words are different.¹¹

Not only did Matthew record Christ’s temptation but Luke did also. Both writers record the Lord’s inspired commentary on Dt. 8:3 with slightly different renderings. Several points must be considered. 1) The Lord had intact before Him the inspired and preserved Hebrew text of Dt. 8:3 (as well as the rest of Deuteronomy, and certainly verses 6:16 and 6:13). 2) Matthew cited Christ’s inspired commentary on Dt. 8:3 *verbatim*, stressing the expression “that proceedeth out of the mouth” (ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος). 3) Luke selectively cited Christ’s inspired commentary, omitting the aforementioned words found in Matthew’s quote, and included the article ὁ (“the”) before “man.” The inspired and preserved passage of Dt. 8:3 was intact in Christ’s day, and the Biblical writers Matthew and Luke gave their inspired renderings of Christ’s various inspired commentaries on Dt. 8:3.¹²

⁹It is used 67 times in the NT. In one case the word Γέγραπται refers to the words of John’s Gospel (Jn. 20:31).

¹⁰The perfect tense is resultative in aspect and past with ongoing results in time (cf. Rom. 9:33).

¹¹The *LXX* adds ὁ and τῷ.

¹²The Gospel writers were not redactors (editors) in the sense of creating words supposedly stated by others as *redaktionsgeschichte* teaches. The Gospel writers gave the *ipsissimi verba* (“the very words”) of Christ and not merely the *ipsissimi vox* (“the voice” or gist) of Christ’s message.

CONCLUSION

The Lord Jesus Christ's bibliology is clear and consistent. He clearly stated His belief in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Hebrew OT since the Words proceeded from the mouth of God. He clearly stated His belief in the authority of Scripture, noting that Scripture gave God's standard for how man shall live. The Lord clearly stated His belief in the availability of Scripture by assuming the accessibility of every word. The Savior clearly stated His belief in the verbal, plenary preservation of God's Words since they had been and were still preserved intact in His day. The incarnate God in the person of Jesus Christ was consistent in His belief and practice since He submitted Himself to the perfectly preserved inscripturated Words He promised He would preserve. It behooves Christians, including pastors, believers and scholars, to emulate Christ's teaching in their bibliology, as the Father required, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Mt. 17:5).

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