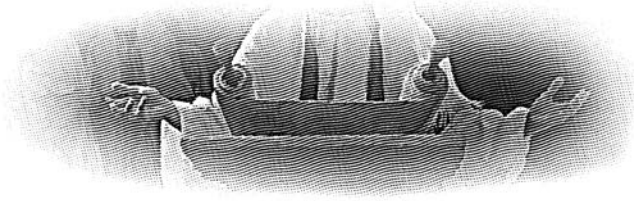


# Jesus and the Apostles’ View of the Bible



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week’s Study:** *Matt. 4:1–11; Matt. 22:37–40; Luke 24:13–35, 44, 45; Luke 4:25–27; Acts 4:24–26.*

**Memory Text:** “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” ’ ” (*Matthew 4:4, NKJV*).

Unfortunately in this postmodern age, the Bible has been largely reinterpreted through the lens of a philosophy that questions both its inspiration and its authority. In fact, the Bible is seen as merely the ideas of human beings living in a relatively primitive culture who couldn’t possibly understand the world as we do today. At the same time, the supernatural element has been either downplayed or even removed from the picture, turning the Bible into a document that, instead of being God’s view of humanity, has become humanity’s view of God. And the result is that, for many, the Bible has become largely irrelevant in an age of Darwinian thinking and modern philosophy.

However, we completely reject that position. Instead, in the New Testament, we can see the inspired way to view the entire Scripture by studying how Jesus and the apostles understood the Old Testament, the only Bible that they had at that time. How did they relate to the people, places, and events described? What were their assumptions and subsequent methods of interpretation? Let’s follow them and their understanding, in contrast to the misconceptions of uninspired humans whose assumptions lead only to skepticism and doubt about the Word of God.

\* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 18.

## It Is Written

The baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist marked the beginning of the Savior's ministry, following which Jesus was led by the Spirit into the Judean wilderness, where—in His weakest human condition—He was tempted by Satan.

**Read** Matthew 4:1–11. How does Jesus defend Himself against Satan's temptations in the wilderness? What should we learn about the Bible from this account?

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When tempted by appetite, Jesus responds: “ ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” ’ ” (*Matt. 4:4, NKJV*). Jesus points back to the living Word and its ultimate, divine source. In this way, He affirms the authority of Scripture. When tempted with the world's kingdoms and glory, Jesus responds, “ ‘It is written, “You shall worship the LORD your God and Him only you shall serve” ’ ” (*Matt. 4:10, Luke 4:8, NKJV*). Christ reminds us that true worship is focused on God and not on anyone else, and that submission to His Word is true worship. Finally, with the temptation on the love of display and on presumption, Jesus responds, “ ‘It is written again, “You shall not tempt the LORD your God” ’ ” (*Matt. 4:7, NKJV; also Luke 4:12*).

In all three temptations, Jesus responds with the words “It is written.” That is, Jesus goes right to the Word of God and nothing else to deal with the attacks and deceptions of Satan. This should be a powerful lesson to all of us: the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the ultimate standard and foundation of our belief.

Yes, the Bible and the Bible alone was Jesus' method of defense against the attacks of the adversary. Jesus is God, but in His defense against Satan He submits Himself solely to the Word of God.

It is not opinion; it is not an elaborate, convoluted argument; it is not with words of personal animosity; it is instead by the simple yet profound words of Scripture. For Christ, Scripture has the greatest authority and the greatest power. In this way, His ministry begins with a certain foundation and continues to build upon the trustworthiness of the Bible.

**How can we learn to be just as reliant on the Word of God, and as submissive to it?**

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## Jesus and the Law

**Read** Matthew 5:17–20; Matthew 22:29; and Matthew 23:2, 3. What is Jesus saying in these contexts?

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Jesus taught His disciples obedience to the Word of God and the law. There is never a hint of Him doubting the authority or relevance of Scripture. On the contrary, He constantly referred to it as the source of divine authority. And to the Sadducees He said, “ ‘You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God’ ” (*Matt. 22:29, RSV*). Jesus taught that a mere intellectual knowledge of the Bible and its teachings was insufficient for knowing truth and, more important, for knowing the Lord, who is that truth.

**What** does Matthew 22:37–40 tell us about Jesus’ view of the law of Moses?

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In this statement to the lawyer, Jesus summarizes the Ten Commandments, given to Moses nearly 1,500 years earlier. It should be recognized how Jesus focuses on the Old Testament law and elevates it to the highest level. Many Christians incorrectly have concluded that here a new commandment is given, and thus somehow the Old Testament law is now replaced by the New Testament gospel. But the fact is that what Jesus is teaching is based on the Old Testament law. Christ had unveiled and revealed the law more fully so that “ ‘on these two commandments’ ” (summarizing the Ten Commandments, the first four of which focus on the human-divine relationship, and the second six of which focus on human interpersonal relationships) “ ‘depend all the law and the prophets’ ” (*Matt. 22:40, RSV*). In this way, Jesus also uplifts the entire Old Testament when He says, “the law and the prophets,” for this is a shortened way of referring to the law, prophets, and writings, or all three divisions of the Old Testament.

“He [Christ] pointed to the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority, and we should do the same. The Bible is to be presented as the word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 39, 40.

**What (if any) competitive sources of authority (family, philosophy, culture) might be pitted against your submission to the Word of God?**

## Jesus and All Scripture

**Read** Luke 24:13–35, 44, 45. How does Jesus use the Scriptures to teach the disciples the gospel message?

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After the death of Christ, His followers were confused and in doubt. How could this have happened? What did it mean? In this chapter of Luke, we see that Jesus appears to them twice, first to two who are on the road to Emmaus, and then to others later. On two separate occasions, Jesus explains how all has been fulfilled from the Old Testament prophecies: “And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27, *RSV*).

Again in Luke 24:44, 45, He says, “ ‘These are my words . . . that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled’ ” (*RSV*). Jesus then “opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (*RSV*).

Note the specific reference in Luke 24:27 to “all the scriptures.” This is reemphasized in the second passage as the “ ‘law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms’ ” (Luke 24:44, *RSV*). This establishes clearly that Jesus, the Word made flesh (*John 1:1–3, 14*), relies on the authority of Scripture to explain how these things were foretold hundreds of years earlier. By referring to the totality of Scripture, Jesus is teaching the disciples by example. As they go forth to spread the gospel message, they, too, were to expound all Scripture to bring understanding and power to the new converts throughout the world.

Notice, too, how in Matthew 28:18–20, Jesus says to His disciples then (and to us today) that “ ‘all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’ ” (*RSV*). But that authority remains rooted in His Father and the entire Godhead, for He says to them, “ ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ ” (*RSV*). Then comes the key passage: “ ‘teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you’ ” (*RSV*). What does Jesus teach and command? His teachings are based on all of Scripture. It is upon the prophetic authority of the Word that He came, and it is in fulfillment of the prophecies in Scripture that He submitted to His Father.

**If Jesus accepts all of Scripture, why must we do the same? Again, how can we learn to accept the authority of all Scripture, even when we realize that not everything is still necessarily applicable to us today? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.**

## Jesus and the Origin and History of the Bible

Jesus taught that the Bible is the Word of God in the sense that what it says is synonymous with what God says. Its origin is found in God and, therefore, contains ultimate authority for every aspect of life. God worked through history to reveal His will to humanity through the Bible.

For instance, in Matthew 19:4, 5 (*NKJV*), *Jesus* refers to a quote written by Moses. But Jesus takes this passage and says, “ ‘He who made them at the beginning . . . said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother.” ’ ” Instead of saying “Scripture says,” Jesus says, “ ‘He who made them at the beginning . . . said,’ ” attributing to the Creator’s Word what the narrator of Genesis wrote. God is, in fact, regarded here as the author of this statement, even though it was written by Moses.

**Read** the following passages. How did Jesus understand the historical persons and events of the Bible?

*Matt. 12:3, 4* \_\_\_\_\_

*Mark 10:6–8* \_\_\_\_\_

*Luke 4:25–27* \_\_\_\_\_

*Luke 11:51* \_\_\_\_\_

*Matt. 24:38* \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus consistently treats Old Testament people, places, and events as historical truth. He refers to Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, Abel in Genesis 4, David eating the showbread, and Elisha among other historical figures. He repeatedly speaks of the sufferings of the prophets of old (*Matt. 5:12, Matt. 13:57, Matt. 23:34–36, Mark 6:4*). In a message of warning, Jesus also describes the days of Noah: “ ‘They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be’ ” (*Matt. 24:38, 39, NKJV*). There is every indication that Jesus was referring to this mighty act of God’s judgment as a historical event.

**Because Jesus Himself refers to these historical people as real, what does it say about the power of Satan’s deceptions that many people today, even professed Christians, often deny their existence? Why must we never fall into that trap?**

## The Apostles and the Bible

The New Testament writers approach the Bible the same way that Jesus does. In matters of doctrine, ethics, and prophetic fulfillment, the Old Testament for them was the authoritative Word of God. We find nothing, anywhere, in what these men say or do that challenges either the authority or authenticity of any part of the Bible.

**What** do these passages below teach us about how the apostles understood the authority of God’s Word?

*Acts 4:24–26* \_\_\_\_\_

*Acts 13:32–36* \_\_\_\_\_

*Rom. 9:17* \_\_\_\_\_

*Gal. 3:8* \_\_\_\_\_

Notice in these passages how closely related the Scriptures are to the voice of God Himself. In Acts 4, just before being filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples praise God for the deliverance of Peter and John. In their praise, they raise their voices, acknowledging God as the Creator and for speaking through David His servant. That is, David’s words are God’s words. In Acts 13:32–36, David is quoted again by Paul, but his words are attributed to God, for verse 32 says: “What God promised to the fathers” (*RSV*).

In Romans 9:17, where one would expect God as the subject, Paul uses the term “Scripture,” saying: “For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh” (*NKJV*), which could actually be stated, “For God says to the Pharaoh.” In Galatians 3:8 the subject “Scripture” is used in place of “God,” showing just how closely tied the Word of God is to God Himself.

In fact, the New Testament writers uniformly rely on the Old Testament as the Word of God. There are hundreds of quotes in the New Testament from the Old Testament. One scholar has compiled a list of 2,688 specific references: 400 from Isaiah, 370 from the Psalms, 220 from Exodus, and so on. If one were to add to this list allusions, themes, and motifs, the number would greatly increase. The books are replete with references to the Old Testament prophecies that are often introduced with the phrase, “it is written” (*Matt. 2:5, Mark 1:2, Mark 7:6, Luke 2:23, Luke 3:4, Rom. 3:4, Rom. 8:36, Rom. 9:33, 1 Cor. 1:19, Gal. 4:27, 1 Pet. 1:16*). All of this confirms that the Old Testament Scriptures are the foundation upon which the teachings of Jesus and the apostles rest.

**What should these examples teach us about how dangerous any ideas are that would lessen our trust in the authority of the Scriptures?**

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, “As a Child,” pp. 68–74, and “The Temptation,” pp. 114–123, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“Men consider themselves wiser than the word of God, wiser even than God; and instead of planting their feet on the immovable foundation, and bringing everything to the test of God’s word, they test that word by their own ideas of science and nature, and if it seems not to agree with their scientific ideas, it is discarded as unworthy of credence.”  
—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 27, 1884, p. 1.

“Those who become best acquainted with the wisdom and purpose of God as revealed in His word, become men and women of mental strength; and they may become efficient workers with the great Educator, Jesus Christ. . . . Christ has given His people the words of truth, and all are called to act a part in making them known to the world. . . . There is no sanctification aside from the truth, the word. Then how essential that it should be understood by every one!”—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 432.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1 If Jesus, the Gospel writers, and Paul treated the Old Testament Scriptures as the Word of God, what should this tell us about why many of the modern views of Scripture today are wrong and why we should not fall for these arguments, no matter who teaches them?
- 2 Just to give people an idea of where many modern biblical scholars have gone with their skepticism, here are a few things that many modern scholars deny. They reject a literal six-day Creation, accepting billions of years of evolution instead. They reject a sinless Adam in an unfallen world. They reject a universal worldwide flood. Some reject the literal existence of Abraham. Some reject the story of the Exodus. Some reject the miracles of Jesus, including even His bodily resurrection. Some reject the idea of predictive prophecy, in which prophets tell the future, sometimes centuries or even millennia in advance. What should these conclusions tell us about what happens when people start doubting the authority and authenticity of Scripture? Also, what are ways to try to help such people come to a clear understanding of truth?
- 3 In response to the question at the end of Tuesday’s study, how do we understand how all Scripture can be inspired, even the parts that are not necessarily applicable to us today?

## Potluck Wins Hearts

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY, Adventist Mission

On Sabbaths, vacationers flocked to the Seventh-day Adventist church in Russia's popular Black Sea resort city of Gelendzhik.

The visitors from Siberia, the Ural Mountains, and other far-flung Russian regions reminded the pastor, Andrey Prokopev, of something special he had learned while studying at Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in the Philippines. When visitors came to the campus church, Prokopev and other students took turns providing them with a Sabbath fellowship meal afterward.

Prokopev proposed a similar Sabbath fellowship meal for guests at the Russian church. He suggested that the church's six Sabbath School classes, each with six to seven members, could take turns providing the food.

After the next Sabbath sermon, 20 vacationers in the congregation gladly accepted an invitation to stay for lunch in the church's kitchen. After the visitors were filled and happy, Prokopev asked them to introduce themselves and share how they became Adventists.

The resulting personal testimonies were powerful, and the church members enjoyed hearing them. Prokopev wanted more people to hear the stories, and he began to invite non-Adventist neighbors to church to worship and eat.

One Sabbath, an Adventist vacationer told a remarkable story about her grandfather, a cook who prepared food for soldiers traveling by train to the Western Front during World War II. The cook was much respected for his hard work and alcohol-free lifestyle, but he was an Adventist who refused to work on Sabbath. His superiors could not give him Saturdays off, but they didn't want to lose him. Finally, the commander summoned him.

"My friend, I will fire you on Friday," he said. "Then I will hire you on Sunday."

The arrangement worked well. For the rest of the war, the cook was fired every Friday and rehired every Sunday.

When the vacationer finished telling the story about her grandfather, a non-Adventist visitor at the table spoke up.

"I want to be an Adventist," she said.

To Prokopev's joy, he later baptized the woman. In all, four people, all attracted to Jesus through personal testimonies, have been baptized in the two years since the fellowship meals began.



PROKOPEV, 43, said fellowship meals with personal testimonies have been a huge blessing for his church and helped Sabbath School class members grow closer as they work together to care for guests. "Personal testimonies are very important," he said. "They show God, His mercy, and His desire to be our God."