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Jesus Christ's Perspective on Scripture: How Christians Should View the Bible

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Introduction

Though the world attempts to discredit the Bible, Jesus viewed the Scriptures as the final authority for absolute truth concerning history, morality, prophecy, and as something which serves as an effective weapon for victory in spiritual warfare. Since Christianity is Christocentric, it is only fitting for one to investigate Jesus' perspective on Scripture.¹ If Jesus believed the Scriptures to be factually accurate, all Christians should view the Bible from the same perspective because all Christians are called to be disciples of Christ.

History

Jesus believed the Scriptures to be factual accounts of literal history. He referred to Adam and Eve as the two created in the beginning of creation, Noah and the Flood, Lot's wife, and Jonah and the whale as literal historical accounts throughout the Gospels. The words of Jesus never discredit the historical claims of the Old Testament; His words never contradict any of the Old Testament's teachings.

“... *I am.*” (*John 8:58*)

Jesus believed the Scriptures to be factual accounts of literal history. He referred to the Old Testament when He told the Jews who He was: “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (*John 8:58*). The “I am” (*ego eimi*) in verse fifty-eight expresses the unity of the Father and the Son.² Jesus is claiming to be God when He quotes

¹ Christopher C. Peppier, “The Christocentric Principle: A Jesus-Centred Hermeneutic,” *Conspectus* 13:1, (Mar 2012): 135.

² Leon Morris, *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 124.

Exodus 3:14, therefore He is claiming to be the author of the Old Testament. Jesus' reference to God speaking to Moses (Ex. 3:14) confirms that He views Scripture as historical truth.

This passage here in John's Gospel most likely takes place between "the Monday morning following the Feast of Booths (John 8:2) and the Sabbath ending that same week (John 9:14)."³ A major textual problem is presented here because John 7:53-8:11 is not found in some of the ancient manuscripts, and this has caused some scholars to believe that it was not originally part of this Gospel.⁴ The New English Bible completely removes this passage and the New International Version notes a disclaimer, or at least mentions its absence in ancient manuscripts. Other scholars, such as Dr. Elmer Towns, believes that it is an authentic part of the Gospel of John.⁵

Concerning the words "I am" from Jesus' statement in John 8:58, the authors of *John* note that the original Hebrew of Exodus 3:14, and the original Greek of John 8:58, provide more detail for understanding the seriousness of Jesus' statement: The Hebrew word "'ani hu,' 'I (am) he' was Yahweh's self-designation (Isa. 43:10; 46:4; 48:12).⁶ "I am" in the Greek (εἰμὶ) "points to the absolute, independent, and eternal existence of Jesus; it places Jesus 'in God's existence beyond time, in his eternal present."⁷ The seriousness of (εἰμὶ) is summed up by Barrett as "I eternally was, as now I am, and ever continue to be."⁸

³ Elmer Towns, *The Gospel of John: Believe and Live* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), 77.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Murray J. Harris, Andreas J. Kostenberger, and Robert W. Yarbrough, *John: Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2015), 183.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Noah and the Flood (Matthew 24:37-39)

Another example of Jesus referring to the Old Testament as a literal event in history is when He discusses Noah and the Flood. Jesus refers to Noah in the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Matthew, and in the seventeenth chapter of the book of Luke. In the book of Luke, Jesus mentions Noah when telling His disciples about what to expect before the Second Advent: “And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man” (Luke 17:26).

The story of Noah and the Flood was very well-known in the eastern Mediterranean world.⁹ The Sibylline Oracles as well as the writings of Plutarch (45-125 A.D.) mention the historical account of Noah and the Flood.¹⁰ In the Sibylline Oracles, Sibylla claims to be Noah’s daughter-in-law: “For when the world was deluged with waters, and a certain single approved man was left floating on the waters in a house made of hewn wood, with beasts, and birds, so that the world might be filled again, I was his daughter-in-law and I was of his blood (Sib. Or. 3:823-27).”¹¹ The city of Apamea in Asia Minor had the Greek nickname of *kibotoi* (which meant “people of the ark”), and the Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint, translates *kibotoi* the same way.¹² Jesus not only affirmed the story of Noah and the Flood as an actual event in history when making this statement to His disciples, He was also telling of a worldwide judgment that will happen when He returns, “the likes of which have not been seen since the great flood long ago.”¹³

⁹ Craig A. Evans, *Matthew* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 413.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 414.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

Jesus' words here in Matthew are part of the passage that deals with His fifth and final part of the Olivet Discourse, the Judgment of Jerusalem and the coming of Christ (24:1-26:2).¹⁴ This passage of Scripture is very significant because Jesus parallels the beginning of time (Noah) with the end of time (the Second Advent).¹⁵ Concerning the "day and hour" of verse thirty-six, Turner notes, "The expression 'that day and hour' is a general time indicator, not a precise expression implying a specific time of day. The word 'day' may imply the eschatological significance of the biblical 'day of the Lord.' People living in the days preceding Jesus' coming will be as unaware of it as Noah's contemporaries were of the flood (Gen. 6:5-7:24)."¹⁶ The referencing of the specific time of Noah's day shows another example of how Jesus considers the Old Testament to be literal history.

"Man shall not live by bread alone ..." (John 6:35)

The context of Matthew 4:1-11 is that of Jesus being tempted by the devil after he was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. When the devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread for food, Jesus responded by saying, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone" (Matt. 4:4). There are two things of significance to note here in this passage: (1) Jesus fought the devil by quoting Scripture, and (2) Jesus quoted the passage from the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 8:3, which deals with God humbling Israel, watching to see if Israel would obey, and "disciplining them as a father disciplines a son; Israel failed, but Jesus was faithful."¹⁷

¹⁴ David L. Turner, *Matthew: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 565.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 589.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Concerning the “bread” that Jesus speaks of in John 6:32-35, the authors of *John* note, “The bread supplied by God (Greek, τοῦ θεοῦ) is like manna in that it comes down (ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) but is unlike manna in that: (i) it is the true bread (v. 32); (ii) it constantly provides (διδούς) more than nourishment; (iii) it is intended for all people without distinction (τῷ κόσμῳ).”¹⁸ The Greek verb “καταβαίνω” refers to “the bread from heaven” seven different times in the sixth chapter of John.¹⁹ The Jews viewed manna symbolically as “heavenly food for the soul.”²⁰ When Jesus refers to Himself as “the bread of life,” He reaches back to the passage in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy to show again that He believes the historic accounts of the Old Testament to be so.

But from the Beginning ... (Mark 10:6)

Jesus referred to Adam and Eve as those who were created at the beginning of the creation, and that they were the first married couple.²¹ The Gospel of Mark records Jesus’ words: “But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female” (Mark 10:6, King James Bible). These words were spoken after the Pharisees tempted Jesus by asking him if it was lawful for a man to put away his wife (Mark 10:2). Some people believe that Adam and Eve were figurative, not literal, but Jesus referred to them from the book of Genesis as the first

¹⁷ Michael Rydelnik, and Michael Vanlaningham, *The Mood Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary on the Whole Bible by the Faculty of Moody Bible Institute* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1459.

¹⁸ Harris, Kostenberger, and Yarbrough, *John*, 134.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2011), 203.

married couple, and their creation as an actual event recorded in the historical timeline of the world. Jesus acknowledges the existence of Adam and Eve and affirmed their placement at the beginning of creation (Gen. 1:26-27). Not only did He affirm the existence of Adam and Eve and their creation in the beginning, He also affirmed God as their Creator (Mark 10:6).

Sodom, Lot, and Lot's Wife (Luke 17:28-32)

Jesus referred to the event in history in which God sent fire and brimstone to Sodom to destroy the entire place. The context is taken from Luke 17:22-37 and Jesus is telling his disciples what to expect before the Second Advent (the return of Jesus for the second time).²² Jesus is reminding them about Sodom, Lot, and Lot's Wife when speaking of what the world is going to be living like morally when He returns. He is referring to this event, recorded in Genesis 19, as a literal moment in history. He doesn't present this as some kind of figurative example, but as a literal moment, and as a moment to come in the timeline of the history of the world.

Jesus first explained that His return would be in a time when His disciples will desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and that there will be false sightings of the Son of man to come (Luke 17:22-23).²³ One of the most important truths to gather from Jesus referencing this Old Testament historical event is that Jesus not only told His disciples what to look for before His return, but His connection to Lot's wife is very significant because the Christian life is one in which the believer should not "look back," or "go against" God's word, and as a result, Lot's

²² Peter Ruckman, *The Book of Luke: The Bible Believer's Commentary Series* (Pensacola, FL: BB Bookstore, 2013), Kindle loc. 11344.

²³ Rydelnik and Vanlaningham, 1585.

wife became a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26).²⁴ Jesus referred to this moment in history to relate it to the concept that there will be an urgency related to the coming of the kingdom, and it will be a time “to not look back or hesitate.”²⁵

Moses and the Serpent (John 3:14)

At an early point in the history of the world, God did something that would shock a lot of people in this modern day; He sent fiery serpents which bit and killed much of the Israelites (Num. 21:6). The Israelites were brought out of Egypt under the guidance and leadership of God through Moses, and at a certain point, after destroying the Canaanites, they began to speak against both God and Moses because their souls were discouraged from this journey, and because of “the lack of food and the monotony of the manna (Num. 21:1-5).”²⁶ The slaughter of the land of the Canaanite inhabitants of the promised land which the Israelites were to possess was “a foreshadowing of the final judgment of sinners by God.”²⁷

The book of Numbers is basically a story of two generations of Israelites; the first generation died off in the desert, and the second is right on the edge of entering the promised land when the book ends.²⁸ Those who were still alive after being attacked by serpents were given a second chance by God after they confessed their sin to Moses and asked him to pray for them (Num. 21:7). God instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it on a pole, and any

²⁴ Rydelnik and Vanlaningham, 1586.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Iain M. Duguid, “A New Beginning” in *Preaching the Word: Numbers: God’s Presence in the Wilderness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

man that looked upon the serpent of brass lived (v. 9). The serpent wrapped around a pole is still used by medical doctors today, but instead of only one serpent they have two, which was the symbol of Asclepius (the Greek god of healing).²⁹

Jesus references this moment recorded in the Old Testament as an actual event recorded in history: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (John 3:14). The difference here in the book of John is that eternal life is offered instead of only physical healing.³⁰ Dr. Elmer Towns notes, “By drawing this parallel, Jesus signified his death and the spiritual healing that will come when anyone looks to Him and believes on Him. The expression ‘lifted up’ in this gospel always refers to the cross.”³¹

Jonah and the Whale (Matthew 12:40-41)

The significance of the timing of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection is heavily dependent upon Jesus referencing the Old Testament historical account of Jonah and the whale. It is widely believed that Jesus was crucified and buried on a Friday (commonly referred to as “Good Friday”) and resurrected on the following Sunday morning.³² But according to Jesus’ words in the book of Matthew, there had to be more time than from Friday to Sunday: “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40). As one can see, Friday to Sunday does not allow for enough time to have three days and three nights. According to Scripture, “Good

²⁹ Peter Ruckman, *The Book of John: The Bible Believer’s Commentary Series* (Pensacola, FL: BB Bookstore, 2005), Kindle loc. 2270.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Elmer Towns, *The Gospel of John: Believe and Live* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), 32.

³² Ruckman, *The Book of Matthew: The Bible Believer’s Commentary Series* (Pensacola, FL: BB Bookstore, 1970), Kindle loc. 4440-4517.

Friday” is not the biblical timeline for the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.³³ So, Jesus does not only solidify the story of Jonah and the whale as a literal moment in the timeline of the history of the world when He references the Old Testament as absolute truth, but He also helps clarify the timeline of when He was actually crucified, buried, and resurrected.³⁴

Moral Authority of Old Testament Law

Jesus believed the Old Testament Law to be God’s standard for righteousness.³⁵ He referred to it as the absolute moral standard by which one is to live in order for God to be pleased, and He also raised the bar of its standard by pointing out that man’s heart, not in the act itself, is where the sin begins (Matt. 5:27-28).

“Thou shalt not ... but I say unto you ...” (Matthew 5:27-28)

Jesus refers to the Old Testament, specifically Exodus 20:14, when dealing with the moral issue of adultery: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:27-28). As mentioned previously, this is Jesus raising the bar by pointing out the heart of issue, the issue that sin begins in the heart, or by being in agreement with a sinful imagination. One thing Jesus is pointing out here is that two parties are involved with this sin, and both violate it when adultery takes place.³⁶ Another point of this

³³ Ruckman, *The Book of Matthew*, Kindle loc. 4440-4517.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Terry Mortenson, “Embracing Christ’s View of Scripture,” Answers in Genesis, July 1, 2013. <https://answersingenesis.org/is-the-bible-true/embracing-christs-view-of-scripture/>.

³⁶ Peter Ruckman, *The Book of Matthew*, Kindle loc. 2044.

verse is that it teaches that Jesus endorsed the Old Testament Law as the final authority for morality.³⁷

The Sermon on the Mount here in Matthew “does not appear as such” in the Gospel of Mark, and only part of it is record in the Gospel of Luke.³⁸ The text here, Turner notes, “emphasizes that Jesus himself is speaking with authority that transcends that of the previous divine revelation through Moses.”³⁹ Jesus’ reference to and endorsement of the seventh commandment confirms that He views the Ten Commandments as God’s Law and moral authority.

“Thou knowest the commandments ...” (Mark 10:19)

When questioned what one must do to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17), Jesus responded by saying, “Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother” (Mark 10:19). This questioned was asked before Jesus shed His blood on the cross for sins, and so, one is dealing with Old Testament salvation, which is by *works*, not “by grace through faith” (Eph. 2:8-9), and that is why Jesus’ response to the man was that he needed to obey the Old Testament Law in order to inherit eternal life.⁴⁰ The commandments listed in verse nineteen are the commandments that a rich man is more likely to violate.⁴¹ Jesus views the commandments as God’s Law for

³⁷ Terry Mortenson, “Embracing Christ's View of Scripture.”

³⁸ Turner, *Matthew*, 141.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁴⁰ Peter Ruckman, *The Gospel of Mark: The Bible Believer's Commentary Series* (Pensacola, FL: BB Bookstore, 2017), Kindle loc. 6310.

⁴¹ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 90.

righteousness, and when speaking to a Jewish man who wants to live forever (Mark 10:17), Jesus reminds him of the Old Testament commandments, and in doing so, He confirms both their validity and moral authority.

Christ is the End of the Law for Righteousness (Romans 10:4)

The apostle Paul wrote something crucial concerning the transition that happened from *salvation by works* to *salvation by faith* in his epistle to the Romans: “For **Christ is the end of the law for righteousness** to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4). Jesus’ words on the cross help clarify the importance and significance of understanding the apostle Paul’s statement: “It is finished” (John 19:30). The significance of Jesus’ statement is noted in that it is a declaration that the atonement (reconciliation)⁴² was now complete.⁴³

The Old Testament sacrificial system was a system designed by God which was used for sacrificing animals (oxen, sheep, goats, and pigeons) and produce of the field (wine, oil, corn, dough, cakes, etc.).⁴⁴ The peace offering, an offering for those who were at peace with God, was for expressing gratitude and obligation to God, and fellowship with Him as an act of worship.⁴⁵ There were animal sacrifices for the sin offering, the guilt offering, the burnt offering, and the

⁴² *American Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “atonement,” accessed April 19, 2020, <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/atonement>.

⁴³ Rydelnik and Vanlaningham, 1659.

⁴⁴ Merrill C. Tenney, *Zondervan’s Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1967), 739.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 740.

peace offerings.⁴⁶ The vegetable, or bloodless sacrifices were of two kinds: (1) the meat offerings, and (2) the drink offerings.⁴⁷

Lambs were used in the guilt, the sin, and the burnt offerings, and there are subtle but very important differences between the three: (1) the blood was sprinkled around the altar for the sin offering, (2) the blood was poured over the surface of the altar for the guilt offering, and (3) the sacrifice was wholly consumed for the burnt offering and its purpose was for propitiation.⁴⁸ Propitiation is defined as (1) “the atonement or atoning sacrifice offered to God to assuage his wrath and render him propitious to sinners,” and (2) “the act of appeasing wrath and conciliating the favor of an offended person.”⁴⁹

The author of the epistle to the Romans, Paul, wrote that Jesus is “whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Rom. 3:25). Jesus’ blood is the only blood which provides forgiveness for sin because it is perfectly holy; there is nothing sinful in Him because He is God (John 8:58) – He is perfect in all His ways.

The apostle Paul penned the Greek word *telos* when writing that Christ is the **end** of the law. *Telos* is a Greek noun used throughout the Bible to indicate an “end, termination, the limit at which a thing ceases to be (always of the end of some act or state, but not at the end of a

⁴⁶ Tenney, *Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, 739-740.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 740.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 739-740.

⁴⁹ *American Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “propitiation,” accessed April 20, 2020, <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/propitiation>.

period of time).”⁵⁰ The word *telos* carries two possible meanings: (1) goal, or (2) termination.⁵¹

The meaning here is not termination because Jesus is not terminating the Law, rather, He is fulfilling the Law because He himself is the fulfillment of it (Matt. 5:17) because the Law aimed at Christ, of which He is the goal.⁵² Jesus is again affirming the absolute truth, existence, and authority of the Scriptures by referencing the Old Testament Law and declaring that He is the Sacrificial Lamb who fulfills it entirely.

Prophecy

“This day is this scripture fulfilled ...” (Luke 4:21)

Jesus believed the prophecies of Scripture to not only be true, but also that He is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah He read in a synagogue in front of a congregation: “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21). Jesus, in Luke 4:18-19, is reading the words of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah 61:18-19. The phrase “this day is the scripture fulfilled” is a reference to the time after He was baptized by John in the Jordan (Matt. 3:13-17) and after “the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him” (Luke 3:22, KJB).⁵³ Jesus is fully aware that the Father “sent and equipped Him to proclaim the message of salvation.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰ “G5056 - *telos* - Strong's Greek Lexicon (KJV).” Blue Letter Bible. Accessed March 23, 2020. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/Lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G5056&t=KJV>.

⁵¹ Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 203.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Gerald L. Bray, *Eusebius of Caesarea: Commentary on Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 380.

⁵⁴ Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 1969), 364-365.

Conclusion

Jesus never contradicted the Scriptures in any way, shape, or form. Jesus always treated the historical events recorded in the Old Testament as actual events which happened in literal history. He is never recorded as someone who hesitates as to if it were an actual event or figurative language that may or may not represent some point in history. His constant referencing of the Old Testament is confirmation that Jesus placed the Scriptures as the final authority for all matters. There were times, when answering questions, that Jesus would say “keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:17), and this infers the infallibility and authority of the Bible because it is always His reference point.

The most logical conclusion to be drawn after reading and studying Jesus’ words from each of the four Gospels concerning the Scriptures, the most authentic and historically reliable accounts of Jesus and His teachings, is that Jesus completely endorses everything the Scriptures teach. The factual history, prophetic accuracy, and moral teachings of the Scriptures are completely viewed as such in Jesus’ mind. When viewing the Scriptures from Jesus’ perspective, one will notice that all history, science, prophecy, and absolute moral teachings are to be taken factually as the Bible teaches with final authority in all matters of faith and practice.⁵⁵ The words of the Bible are His words, and because He is God (John 8:58) those words will never pass away (Matt. 24:35); His truth will always be.

⁵⁵ Terry Mortenson, “Embracing Christ's View of Scripture.”

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