

Through Their Word

I have heard on more than one occasion, and even recently, that some only want to believe the “red letters” of the Bible. In other words, only what Jesus spoke and everything else that is not in “red letters” is to be disregarded and not taken as the Word of God but as the words of men. This stems from wanting to defend and adhere to a Matthew 28:19 so-called “trinitarian” baptismal formula, “...in THE NAME of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” They say, “That’s what Jesus said, so I would rather obey him than Peter.” The argument is that Peter’s words are written in black, so they aren’t the words of Jesus. In their minds, Peter was mistaken in his interpretation of Jesus’ commands, although he “standing up with the eleven,” which included Matthew (Acts 2:14). We know that Peter understood what “THE NAME” is!

I have a problem with this red-letter vs black letter premise because the very first four words of the Bible, “In the beginning God...” are written in black. If we are to discard this, then we are discarding the proclamation of God’s absolute and eternal existence. There are several reasons why this fallacy is not only wrong but dangerous.

First of all, when the Scriptures were originally written, they were written with charcoal, oils, quills, on parchment, leather, papyrus, and even etched in stone. They didn’t have one black ink well and one red ink well. Jesus’ words in red weren’t even a thing until 1899 when a publisher (Klopsch) first decided it would be helpful to put Jesus’ words in red. In fact, even today, there are some publishers of the Bible that don’t put Jesus’ words in red. Though we may be thankful, does the fact that someone decided to do this suddenly discredit the rest of the Bible? If you had a Bible prior to 1899 or a modern printing without red letters, how many “inconvenient truths” would you have to muddle through to find Jesus’ words?

Second, Jesus never wrote one word in the Bible. As 2 Peter 1:20-21 tells us, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.” As for the Gospels, Matthew, John, Mark, Luke, and John wrote these as the Holy Ghost (the Spirit of Christ) prompted them and brought all things to their remembrance (John 14:26, which is in red). There were many writers, but only one Author.

Third, Jesus gave credence to many Old Testament writers by directly quoting them (Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc). I would hate not to be able to believe the comforting writings of David in the Psalms because they were not the red words of Jesus Christ. But as Jesus said in John 5:39, “¹Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” And again, in Luke 24:44-45, Jesus said, “And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake 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. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.” The “scriptures” He was referring to were the Old Testament writings. The New Testament had not been written yet.

Fourth, Jesus commissioned His Apostles to go and preach the Gospel and to propagate His teachings to the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-20, Luke 24:46-50). I especially like the way Mark puts it in Mark 16:20: “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” So, the preaching, and later the writing, of the Apostles was ordained, commanded, sanctioned, and confirmed by Jesus Christ!

Fifth, Jesus Himself prayed for His disciples in John 17. In verse 20, He stated, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” Later in Hebrews 2:3, the writer stated, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*.”

To Peter, Jesus gave the Keys to the Kingdom and the authority to bind and loose in heaven and earth (see Matthew 16:19). Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke, also wrote the Book of Acts, in which Peter, the man with the Keys to the Kingdom gave us the only Bible way to be saved! “...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost!... And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:38 & 42).

The Apostles did not teach, preach, or write one thing that was not ordained, commissioned, sanctioned, and anointed by Jesus Christ! To think otherwise and to discard anything anyone other than Jesus said is to stand in direct violation of what John wrote or said, and who was the disciple whom Jesus loved.

John wrote in Revelation 22:18-19: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.”

The bottom line is Jesus did and still does use men to proclaim His word. Ephesians 4:11-13 states, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Individuals who only want to hear what Jesus said have a bigger root problem, and that is submission to the plan of God and the man of God. They want to be their own prophet and priest and not answer to anyone.

Hebrews 13:17: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.”

God has always spoken to man through men. In the Old Testament, it was through the prophets, and the prophets spoke to the people on behalf of God as God’s representative to man. In the New Testament, it was through the Apostles, and many believed on Him through their word. He left His church with the gift of the five-fold ministry, for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ. Today, God still speaks “through their word.”

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