

Jesus and the Written Word

By: Lary Rouse

Years ago a startling survey was brought to my attention. In 1987 Jeffery Hadden surveyed 10,000 American clergy with a simple question: "Do you believe that the Scriptures are the inspired and inerrant Word of God in faith, history and secular matters?" Of these men who fill the pulpits of these "mainline" denominations every week, the vast majority of these preachers answered, "No." They did not trust the Bible as a reliable guide from God! Here are the numbers of the clergy who rejected the written Word:

95% of Episcopalians

87% of Methodists

82% of Presbyterians

77% of American Lutherans

67% of American Baptists

What if Jesus had taken that survey? How would the Lord of heaven and earth have answered these questions? We do not need to guess because Jesus often and clearly addressed these issues during His ministry. Jesus recognized the written word of His day, the Old Testament, as a powerful witness to all that He did. After His resurrection from the dead Jesus spoke of the complete accuracy of the many prophecies concerning Him. "Then He said to them, these *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me." (Luke 24:44)

The confidence Jesus had in the accuracy of the written word was absolute. In answering a challenge Jesus said, ***"Is it not written in your law, 'I said, 'You are gods'?" "If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),"*** (John 10:34-35) Jesus plainly affirmed that if it was "written" in the scriptures, then it was true. Nothing in heaven or on earth could break the force or the truth found in God's written word.

Jesus placed complete trust in the written word in His personal life. When He faced the full force of Satan's temptations in the wilderness, Jesus firmly stood behind the word of God. In three temptations of Satan, Jesus replied each time with these words ***"It is written"*** (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

When men questioned Him about God's will there was one place that Jesus expected all men to go and find the only answer they would need. He was amazed when men showed little knowledge of the written word and would give stern rebukes to those who should have known better. ***"Jesus answered and said to them, Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?"*** (Mark 12:24-27)



What about the written New Testament? Since it was not written during Jesus' life, then how could He have any answers regarding it? Let there be no doubt that Jesus personally affirmed that the future work of His apostles and prophets would be without error. Jesus plainly told His apostles not only about His leaving this world, but also of the future work of the Holy Spirit through these men. ***"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."*** (John 16:12-13)

Jesus knew that this work would be written and preserved for all future generations. ***“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”*** (Matthew 24:35) The delivery, the preserving and the spread of this word was to be personally overseen and assured by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul later boldly affirmed, ***“how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.*** (Ephesians 3:3-5)

The real question for both our modern day clergy and those who hear them in the pews is this, “Do you believe in the Jesus that is found in the Bible?” Paul warned that in both his day as well as in ours there will be those that “preach another Jesus” (2 Cor 11:4). Which one will you follow? Only one speaks with power, has the ability to forgive sins, and holds the power to raise each of us from the dead to eternal life. Will you choose the Biblical Jesus?