

## **The Inspiration of The New Testament**

Is the New Testament given by inspiration of God? That is the question, is it not? Is God the source of the New Testament Scriptures? Is the New Testament the Word of God? If we let the New Testament speak for itself, we shall find that it presents to us a clear picture of its being the inspired Word of God.

### **The Promise of God's Word By The Spirit Through His People**

As God's people think about the Word of God these days, there is often a critical factor that is overlooked. That critical factor is the promise that Jesus made to His church concerning the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised at least three different times that He would send the Holy Spirit and that the Spirit would provide the church with the true words of God.

First of all, we find Jesus making this promise specifically to the apostles. This promise is in regard to their being brought to judgment for their testimony of Christ. Jesus said, *"And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say."* (Luke 12:11–12, AV 1873) The apostles were instructed not to premeditate their answers, because the Holy Spirit would instruct them in their speech. Matthew's record gives us a little more information saying, *"But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."* (Matthew 10:19–20, AV 1873) In other words, the promise of Jesus is that the Holy Spirit would speak through the apostles the words of God. Though the apostle's minds and mouths would be used, the words that would come out of their mouths would have God as their source.

Charles Hodge, teaching on the inspiration of the Scriptures, referred to these words of Christ saying, "If the Scriptures of the old economy were given by inspiration of God, much more were those writings which were penned under the dispensation of the Spirit. Besides, the inspiration of the Apostles is proved, (1.) From the fact that Christ promised them the Holy Spirit, who should bring all things to their remembrance, and render them infallible in teaching. It is not you, He said, that speak, but the Spirit of my Father speaketh in you. He that heareth you heareth me. He forbade them to enter upon their office as teachers until they were endued with power from on high. (2.) This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit descended upon the Apostles as a mighty rushing wind, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance (*dabat eloqui*, as the Vulgate more literally renders the words). From this moment they were new men, with new views, with new spirit, and with new power and authority. The change was sudden. It was not a development. It was something altogether supernatural; as when God said, Let there be light, and there was light. Nothing can be more unreasonable than to ascribe this sudden transformation of the Apostles ... to mere natural causes. Their Jewish prejudices had resisted all the instructions and influence of Christ for three years, but gave way in a moment when the Spirit came upon them from on high. (3.) After the day of Pentecost the Apostles claimed to be the infallible organs of God in all their teachings. They required men to receive what they taught not as the word of man but as the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13); they declared, as Paul does (1 Cor. 14:37), that the things which they wrote were the commandments of the Lord. They made the salvation of men to depend on faith in the doctrines which they taught. Paul pronounces anathema even an angel from heaven who should preach any other gospel than that which he had taught. (Gal. 1:8.) John says that whoever did not receive the testimony which he bore concerning Christ, made God a liar, because John's testimony was God's testimony. (1 John 5:10.) "He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us." (1 John 4:6.) This assertion of infallibility, this claim for the divine authority of their teaching, is characteristic of the whole Bible. The sacred writers all, and everywhere, disclaim personal authority; they never rest the obligation to faith in their teachings, on their own knowledge or wisdom; they never rest it on the truth

of what they taught as manifest to reason or as capable of being proved by argument. They speak as messengers, as witnesses, as organs. They declare that what they said God said, and, therefore, on his authority it was to be received and obeyed.<sup>1</sup> Hodge's understanding was that the Holy Spirit was going to give God's words to the apostles, who would then speak them. In conjunction with other New Testament passages, he has given to us an understanding that those who wrote the New Testament documents understood that they were writing under the influence of the Spirit of God who was giving them the words of God.

Next we find that Jesus also made a more general promise of the Holy Spirit being given to His people and residing within them. *"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* (John 14:15–27, AV 1873) The promise of the Comforter, as given here, is the promise of the very presence of God within the believer. He lives within us and is to us the love of the Father and Son as well as the manifestation of the Father and the Son within us. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and as such will show us the truth of our Father and His Son Jesus.

Didymus the blind, an ancient teacher from the late fourth century said, "The Holy Spirit then, Who cometh in the name of the Son from the Father, shall teach them, who are established in the faith of Christ, all things; all things which are spiritual, both the understanding of truth, and the sacrament of wisdom. But He will teach not like those who have acquired an art or knowledge by study and industry, but as being the very art, doctrine, knowledge itself. As being this Himself, the Spirit of truth will impart the knowledge of divine things to the mind."<sup>2</sup> Thus we find that the promise here is that the Holy Spirit's teaching would be the very words of Jesus. Jesus' promise was that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things as well as reminding them of Jesus' words.

Was this promise just for the apostles, or do we profit from it as well as they? It is my conviction that this promise profits the people of God today. The profit is that He dwells within the believer and gives Him assurance, peace, and understanding of the Word of God that He gave to us through the apostles. John Calvin stated essentially the same thing when he said, *"The Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you.* It is indeed a punishment threatened by Isaiah against unbelievers, that the Word of God shall be to them *as a book that is sealed*, (Isaiah 29:11) but in this manner, also, the Lord frequently humbles his people. We ought, therefore, to wait patiently and mildly for the time of revelation, and must not, on that account, reject the word. When

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1 Charles Hodge, vol. 1, *Systematic Theology*, 160-61 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

2 Saint Thomas Aquinas and John Henry Newman, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, Collected Out of the Works of the Fathers, Volume 4: St. John*, 471 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1845).

Christ testifies that it is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit to teach the apostles what they had already learned from his mouth, it follows that the outward preaching will be vain and useless, if it be not accompanied by the teaching of the Spirit. God has therefore two ways of teaching; for, *first*, he sounds in our ears by the mouth of men; and, *secondly*, he addresses us inwardly by his Spirit; and he does this either at the same moment, or at different times, as he thinks fit.

But observe what are *all these things* which he promises that the Spirit will teach. *He will suggest*, he says, *or bring to your remembrance*, all that I have said. Hence it follows, that he will not be a builder of new revelations. By this single word we may refute all the inventions which Satan has brought into the Church from the beginning, under the pretense of the Spirit. Mahomet and the Pope agree in holding this as a principle of their religion, that Scripture does not contain a perfection of doctrine, but that something loftier has been revealed by the Spirit. From the same point the Anabaptists and Libertines, in our own time, have drawn their absurd notions. But the spirit that introduces any doctrine or invention apart from the Gospel is a deceiving spirit, and not the Spirit of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Calvin understood that God's Word was given to us in written form, thus he brought in Isaiah's prophecy. He also knew that the gospel as preached by Jesus and the apostles was of the same origin and authority as the Old Testament Scriptures, being inspired by God. For this reason Calvin tells us that the Spirit will guide us into the same truths. In other words, the Spirit will give us a written record of Christ and His gospel just as we have the written Word of God in the Old Testament.

We find the same understanding of this passage in the ESV Study Bible: "That he will teach the disciples **all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you** is an important promise regarding the disciples' future role in writing the words of Scripture; see also 16:13–15. Jesus' promise here is specifically to these disciples (who would become the apostles after Pentecost), though there is of course a broader teaching and guiding ministry of the Holy Spirit generally in the lives of believers, as is taught elsewhere in Scripture (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 18).<sup>4</sup>"

We can conclude that this promise is of profit to the believer today, because he has the gift of Scripture through the Spirit of God, and he has the Spirit within him to help him understand the Divinely given Scriptures.

Finally we come to the passage which speaks even more clearly regarding the Spirit, the apostles, and the Scriptures. "*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*" (John 16:12–15, AV 1873) Jesus' promise is that the Spirit will guide us into all truth. The apostles had not received all truth at that point. There were some things that they had not yet become able to understand. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide them into all truth, because He would speak the words of Jesus. These words of Jesus are to be found in the apostolic writings which we call the New Testament. Notice, too, that Jesus promised that the Spirit would show us things to come. Not only do we see that fulfilled in the Revelation, but we find that the New Testament writings are permeated with prophecy of the future. We have good reason to conclude that the New Testament is the Word of God given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Henry Alford stated concerning this passage, "As the *direct fulfilment to the Apostles* of the

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3 John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, Jn 14:25 (Galaxie Software, 2002; 2002).

4 Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible*, 2053 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008).

leading into the whole truth was the unfolding before them those truths which they have delivered down to us in their Epistles,—so, though scattered traces of the fulfilment of *this part* of the promise are found in the Acts and those Epistles, its complete fulfilment was the giving of the Apocalypse, in which τὰ ἐρχόμενα are distinctly the subject of the Spirit's revelation, and with which His *direct* testimony closes: see Rev. 1:1; 22:6, 20.<sup>5</sup> “This is in connexion with ver. 12—and sets forth that the *Spirit guiding into* truth is in fact *the Son declaring* the truth, for He shall shew forth the glory of Christ, by revealing the matters of Christ,—the riches of the Father's love in Him (ver. 15).<sup>6</sup>” Alford seems to have understood that Jesus was referring to the Holy Spirit giving to us God's Word in the New Testament.

There could be given a multitude of quotations from various scholars, preachers, and commentators in support of this view. Let it suffice me to say that Jesus promised to the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them, remind them, and teach them that they might be used of God to give us His words in the New Testament Scriptures. As John MacArthur said, when commenting on Jesus' words in this passage, “This verse, like 14:26, points to the supernatural revelation of all truth by which God has revealed Himself in Christ (vv. 14, 15), particularly. This is the subject of the inspired NT writings.<sup>7</sup>” In other words, The New Testament is the inspired Word of God which presents to us the truth of the revelation of God in Christ.

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5 Henry Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*, Jn 16:13 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2010).

6 Henry Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*, Jn 16:14 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2010).

7 John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible : New American Standard Bible.*, Jn 16:13 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006).