The Bible Alone: Our Doctrine of Scripture

Why We Believe God Speaks to Us Only Through His Written Word

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." — John 3:16

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1. God Has Spoken — and Has Now Spoken Finally

Hebrews 1:1–2

Everything we believe about the Bible begins with one verse: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1–2).

Notice the shape of that sentence. In the past — "at various times and in various ways" — God spoke through prophets, through dreams, through visions, through angels, through signs. That was real revelation, and it was necessary while the story of redemption was still unfolding. But the verse turns on the word "but": that scattered, partial, various pattern of revelation has now been succeeded by something greater and final — God speaking to us "by His Son." The various ways were preparatory. The Son is the culmination.

This is the foundation of everything else in this document. God is not silent, and he has not left us guessing. But the manner in which he speaks changed with the coming of Christ. What was once given "at various times and in various ways" has now been gathered up, completed, and delivered once for all — first in the person of the Son himself, and then, through his apostles and prophets, in the written words of the New Testament that testify of him. We do not look for new, private, ongoing revelations alongside Scripture. We look to what God has already, finally, and sufficiently spoken.

2. The Bible Is the Very Word of God

2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21

Scripture does not merely contain God's word here and there — it is God's word, all of it, and it says so about itself. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16–17). The word translated "given by inspiration of God" literally means "God-breathed." Scripture did not originate in the minds of clever men; it originated in the mouth of God.

Peter tells us exactly how that happened, and how it did not happen. "We have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19–21). Scripture was not men writing down their own religious ideas and calling it God's word. It was the Holy Spirit himself carrying human authors along so that what they wrote was, in every word, exactly what God intended to say.

This is why we treat the Bible differently than we treat any sermon, any book, any dream, or any impression — including our own. A sermon can be wrong. A dream can be wrong. A feeling can be wrong. Scripture cannot be wrong, because its ultimate author is God, who cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and whose word is truth (John 17:17).

3. God's Word Is Pure, Settled, and Unfailing

Psalm 12:6–7; Psalm 119:89, 105, 140, 160

Because Scripture comes from God, it carries his own perfection. "The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O Lord, You shall preserve them from this generation forever" (Psalm 12:6–7). It is not partly true and partly the product of human error — it is pure, the way refined silver is pure, with nothing base mixed in.

Its permanence is just as striking. "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). "The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever" (Psalm 119:160). Culture shifts, opinions change, movements rise and fall — but the word of God does not need updating, revising, or supplementing, because it was already settled in heaven before any of those movements began.

And it is meant to be used — not admired from a distance, but walked by. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). "Your word is very pure; therefore Your servant loves it" (Psalm 119:140). We do not need a second lamp, a fresh light, or a private word to know how to walk. The lamp we have been given is sufficient for every step.

4. Nothing May Be Added, Nothing Taken Away

Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5–6; Revelation 22:18–19

From the very first book of the Bible to the very last, God gives the same warning, in nearly the same words, guarding his word from human tampering. At the giving of the Law: "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). In the Wisdom Literature: "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5–6). And at the very close of the New Testament canon: "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18–19).

That God bookends his entire written revelation with the same solemn warning — do not add, do not take away — tells us something important: Scripture is meant to be a closed, complete, guarded deposit, not an open, ongoing conversation that each generation is free to add its own chapter to. To call anything "a word from God" that is not already in Scripture, and to place it alongside Scripture as equally authoritative, is to add to what God has forbidden anyone from adding to.

5. The Foundation Has Already Been Laid

1 Corinthians 3:10–11; Ephesians 2:19–20; Jude 3

Paul describes the church as a building, and he is careful to describe exactly how that building goes up. "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the

foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:10–11). Believers are "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:19–20).

A foundation, by definition, is laid once. You do not keep re-laying a foundation floor after floor as a building rises — you build upon it. The apostles and prophets were the foundation-laying generation, given unique authority by Christ himself to found the church and to write Scripture (John 16:12–13; Ephesians 2:20). That foundation-laying office and its accompanying revelatory gifts were never intended to continue indefinitely; they belonged to the generation that established the church once for all. We who came after do not lay a new foundation — we build our lives on the one already laid, once, and completed.

This is exactly what Jude means when he urges believers "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Not "a faith still being delivered," but a faith "once for all delivered" — a completed deposit, handed down, to be defended and kept, not added to.

6. Why Dreams and Visions Were Never the Final Word

Numbers 12:6–8; Joel 2:28 / Acts 2:16–17

We do not deny that God, throughout redemptive history, sometimes spoke through dreams and visions. Scripture records it plainly, and even distinguishes it from something greater. When Miriam and Aaron challenged Moses' unique authority, God rebuked them with these words: "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord" (Numbers 12:6–8).

Notice the contrast God himself draws: dreams and visions are described as indirect, veiled, "dark sayings" — a lesser, obscured form of communication compared to speaking "face to face... plainly." Even within the Old Testament, dreams and visions were never presented as the fullest or clearest way God speaks; they were one instrument among several, and a comparatively unclear one at that. Joel prophesied a coming outpouring of the Spirit marked by dreams and visions among God's people (Joel 2:28), which Peter announced as beginning at Pentecost (Acts 2:16–17) — but even that outpouring served the founding of the church, the era in which the apostles were completing the New Testament revelation, not a permanent replacement for it.

Jesus himself pointed his disciples forward to something more reliable than dreams: the Spirit-guided, complete truth that would come through the apostles' own inspired words. "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" (John 16:12–13). That guiding into "all truth" is what produced the New Testament. Once "all truth" has been delivered in writing, there is no remaining category of truth that a dream today could add.

7. Test Every Dream, Every Voice, Every "Word"

Deuteronomy 13:1–5; Jeremiah 23:16, 25–28

Scripture does not merely say dreams are unreliable in theory — it gives us a direct test for what to do when someone claims to have received one. "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'... and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet... for the Lord your God is testing you" (Deuteronomy 13:1–5). Note carefully: God says a dream can even come true, can even be accompanied by a genuine sign or wonder — and still be false, still be a test, still be something to reject, if what it teaches departs from what God has already revealed. The fulfillment of a dream, or its emotional power, is never itself the proof that it came from God. Agreement with God's already-revealed word is the only proof that matters.

Jeremiah faced congregations full of men claiming to speak for God through dreams, and God's verdict on them is sobering: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:16). "I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name... who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams... The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" (Jeremiah 23:25–28). God himself draws the contrast: a dream is chaff; his written, spoken word is wheat. They are not equal, competing sources of authority — one nourishes, and one is worthless husk.

8. Test Everything Against Scripture

1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11; Isaiah 8:20; Colossians 2:18

Because false claims to divine revelation are common — and were common even in the apostolic age — Scripture repeatedly commands believers to test every spiritual claim, not simply accept it. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). The believers in Berea are held up as the model of discernment precisely because "they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11) — testing even the apostle Paul's own preaching against the written Scriptures.

Isaiah gives the standard in a single sentence: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Scripture is the test; anything that fails to align with it — however spiritual, however sincere, however emotionally compelling — is declared to have no light in it at all.

Paul warns the Colossians against a related danger: being led astray by those who claim special access to unseen, private revelation. "Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Colossians 2:18). Claims of private visions or unseen encounters, offered as a source of spiritual authority alongside or above Scripture, are here named for what they are: a fleshly puffing-up, not genuine spirituality.

9. Not Even a Miracle Can Overrule Scripture

Galatians 1:8–9; 2 Corinthians 11:13–15; Matthew 24:24; John 10:35

Perhaps the strongest statement in all of Scripture on this subject comes from Paul, and he states it in the most extreme terms he can find: "Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8–9). Not a false teacher. Not a deceived dreamer. An angel from heaven — and Paul says even that being's message must be rejected and cursed if it contradicts the already-delivered gospel. If an angelic appearance carries no authority to overturn Scripture, then certainly no human dream, vision, or impression does either.

This is not paranoia; it is realism about the spiritual world. "Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:13–15). Jesus warned that "false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24). Impressive spiritual experiences, signs, and wonders are, on their own, no guarantee of a message's divine origin — Scripture tells us plainly to expect convincing counterfeits.

What, then, can be trusted without qualification? Jesus tells us: "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Dreams can deceive. Angels can be counterfeited. Feelings can mislead. Scripture — and Scripture alone — cannot be broken.

10. Guard Against the Itching Ear

2 Timothy 4:2–4

Paul's charge to Timothy is also his charge to us: "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Timothy 4:2–4).

An "itching ear" wants a message tailored to its own preferences — something new, something exciting, something that confirms what it already wants to hear, rather than the settled, sometimes-uncomfortable truth of Scripture faithfully preached. Every generation, including ours, is tempted to trade "the word" for something that feels fresher: a private revelation, a modern prophecy, a dream someone insists came from God. Scripture's answer is not to chase what feels new, but to preach, hold to, and be shaped by the word that was finished long ago.

11. Our Commitment

Proverbs 3:5–6; Psalm 119:105

For all of these reasons, Calvary Jesus Church is built on this settled conviction: God has spoken fully and

finally in Scripture, and anything claimed to be a word from God that is not already found in, or in agreement with, the 66 books of the Bible is not from God — no matter how sincerely it is believed, how vividly it is experienced, or how impressive the sign that accompanies it.

This is not a diminished view of God's power to communicate; it is confidence in what he has already, graciously, completely given. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5–6). We do not need a dream to direct our paths — we have "a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path" already in hand (Psalm 119:105), sufficient for every decision, every trial, and every day, until Christ returns.

We say with Martin Luther before the Diet of Worms: unless we are convinced by Scripture and plain reason, our conscience is captive to the Word of God, and we do not accept the authority of dreams, visions, or private revelations over it. God help us. Here we stand.

If this study has raised questions for you, or if you would like to talk further about why we hold Scripture as our sole and sufficient authority, we would love to hear from you. Please reach out to us through our Contact page — we would count it a joy to open God's Word with you.