

The Bible
The Authority of The Scriptures
by Hendrik Joubert

Although the Bible is generally accepted as the Word of God not many recognize it as the *exclusive* source by which to establish the rules regulating our submission to, and our worship of God with the purpose of gaining access to His grace. ***The grace of God that brings salvation*** is said to have *appeared to all men,*¹² ***teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,***... Titus 2:11-12 (NKJV) Grace is therefore not merely an abstract concept suggesting all for nothing; it teaches us to change our lives (repent) to ***live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.*** The Bible, and specifically the New Testament of Jesus Christ, contains this teaching.

The failure to recognize the Bible as the only source of authority causes confusion and division among those who consider themselves believers. Not unlike Israel of old, we fail to recognize ourselves in fulfilling prophecy in this regard: ***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 4:3 (NKJV)

Two things may contribute to a failure to recognize the present denominational situation where we can worship where they preach it ***the way we like to hear it*** in this prophecy. One concerns the use of the word *fables*. Many believe *as long as the essence of the gospel* – Jesus the Christ and Him crucified – is present, the rest of the details are optional. The apostle must therefore be referring to alternative *stories* consisting of *verbal denials* of the Son of God, such as atheism, idolatry and the other religions of the world. Notice however that when ***certain men came down from Judea***¹ to teach that, in addition to faith in Jesus, ***it is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses,***² it resulted in a perversion of the gospel.³ (¹Acts 15:1; ²1:5; ³Galatians 1:6-9)

Then there is the tendency to think of prophecy in the distant future, and ***the time will come*** is projected into what many consider the *end times* leading up to the second coming. That this prophecy given through the apostle was to be fulfilled within their lifetime is evident from the context: ***But you*** (Timothy) ***be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*** 2 Timothy 4:5 (NKJV)

The context of their discussion consists of the letter as a whole, but more specifically the previous chapter. It is important to realize that the Bible was not written in chapters and verses. The division of the Bible into chapters was completed before it was further divided into verses to make referencing easy. The division into chapters sometimes interrupts a thought. The value and the authority of the Scriptures, as well as the time frame of the prophecy, become apparent when one reads chapters 3 and 4 as a unit.

The introductory statement of chapter three, and specifically the phrase ***in the last days,*** causes many to move the things warned against to the distant future, also to the final days before the Lord's return. At the risk of sounding too simplistic and even conceited, it is quite simple to establish that the phrase refers to what one may call *the last age* or *dispensation*, that of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ.

When Peter prepares to preach the gospel for the first time he explains their ability to do so in the tongues of all those present in Jerusalem at the time... ***But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*** ¹⁷ ***AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE LAST DAYS, SAYS GOD, THAT I WILL POUR OUT OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH; YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS.*** Acts 2:16-17 NKJV

What they were witnessing is something God said would happen ***in the last days;*** a fact announced through the prophet and confirmed through the apostle. We therefore have inspired interpretation of prophecy, and it was happening in the first century. Consider also the following statement: ***God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,*** ² ***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 NKJV

The word ***these*** in the phrase confirms the meaning; they were living ***in these last days*** when the final message of salvation was to be delivered through the Son; and this agrees with what Peter was saying. Notice the list of

credentials which follow the identification and declaration of Jesus as the Supreme Source of communication. **All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Matthew 26:18** (NKJV)

This accumulation of *credentials* listed in **Hebrews 1:2-14** builds up to the most serious warning, to pay attention to His words. We then find an explanation of the meticulous way in which His words were delivered and confirmed by both witnesses and ultimately by God. This is stated as having been accomplished. **Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.** ² **For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,** ³ **how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,** ⁴ **God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?** **Hebrews 2:1-4** (NKJV)

Jesus lived under the law, and **one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.** You would have a better chance of *heaven and earth passing away* than for Jesus not to accomplish this; He came to *fulfill the law and the prophets*. **Matthew 5:17-18** (NKJV) The final words spoken by the Lord is given through John: **It is finished. John 19:30** Through Paul we learn that He nailed this law, condemning the Jew and excluding the Gentile, to the cross. **Colossians 2:13-17**

While He did not violate a single principle, God tells us through the Hebrew writer that the New Covenant in His blood **at the first began to be spoken of by the Lord.** Jesus did not merely interpret the law; He announced the New Testament by which all who submit to God would inherit eternal life. The Lord chose witnesses of His resurrection; individuals who accompanied Him **beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.** **Acts 1:22** (NKJV) He made sure that these who are able to testify to His identity after the resurrection would remember all He taught them **while being present with**¹ them, but also that the complete details (*all truth*) was revealed to them by the Holy Spirit.² **John 14:25-26; 216:12-13.**

Their words were confirmed by God, supplying us with the purpose of the gifts being made available during the time when they did not have the complete or *perfect* message revealed as we have it in written form today. (**1Corinthians 13:10**) Through Jude the following warning is issued: **I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.** **Jude 1:3** (NKJV)

When Paul warns Timothy in the third chapter of his second letter he explains how Timothy would be able to avoid becoming part of the *drift* (subtle process) from the words of Jesus: **But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,** ¹⁵ **and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.** ¹⁶ **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,** ¹⁷ **that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.** **2 Timothy 3:14-17** (NKJV)

The only way in which to avoid rejection is to use the Scriptures, given by *inspiration of God*¹ to establish *doctrine train in the righteousness* of God,² *reprove* and *correct* those who stray from *sound doctrine*³ as it is the source that *thoroughly* equips the servants of God for *every good work*. (¹2Timothy 3:16-17; ²Romans 10:1-3; ³2Timothy 4:3) When men make the rules, worship is *in vain*. **AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.** **Matthew 15:9** (NKJV)