

MISTAKE 7

THE SCRIPTURES ARE SUFFICIENT: WE DO NOT NEED ANYTHING ELSE!

In dealing with our biblical understanding of what is going on in the world today, one of the common mistakes that people make concerns claims about things that are not found in Scripture. This includes dreams, visions, celestial phenomena, etc.

Basically, they claim that we need to understand things that are not found in the Bible that will help us in our comprehension of last days Bible prophecy. Simple put it is the Bible...and...

These sorts of claims are tragic. Indeed they contradict what the Lord has already revealed to us. Three observations need to be made.

OBSERVATION 1 WE ARE NOT TO GO BEYOND THAT WHICH IS WRITTEN

First, we are not to go “beyond that which is written.” Paul wrote:

Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying: “Nothing beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6 CSB).

OBSERVATION 2 EVERYTHING NECESSARY HAS ALREADY BEEN REVEALED TO US

In the Scriptures, God has revealed everything that is necessary for us to know about Him and His plan for time and eternity. Jude wrote:

But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people (Jude 3 NLT).

The faith has been “once and for all delivered” “once for all time.” God has told us everything that needs to be said. Therefore, we derive our information from the Bible and from it alone. We do not go elsewhere to discover what will happen in the future.

OBSERVATION 3 WE ARE TO READ THE BIBLE FOR WHAT IT SAYS, WE DO NOT READ BETWEEN THE LINES

We are to read the Bible at face-value. In other words we do not have to read between the lines to find hidden messages. Paul wrote:

Our letters have been straightforward, and there is nothing written between the lines and nothing you can't understand (2 Corinthians 1:13 NLT)

The Amplified Bible puts it this way:

For we write you nothing other than what you read and understand [there is no double meaning in what we say]. And I hope you will [accurately] understand [divine things] until the end (2 Corinthians 1:13 Amplified Bible)

To sum up, we go to the Bible alone for our information about the future and in doing so we read the Scriptures in a straightforward manner. There are no hidden messages or any double meanings in the text.

Along this line, I have included from my book, *What Everyone Needs To Know About The Bible*, an explanation of the sufficiency of Scripture. Hopefully this will provide further understanding as to why we must go to the Bible and to it alone. As always, this is a free download on our website educatingourworld.com. under the heading of *The Bible*.

WHAT IS THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE?

One of the most important doctrines with respect to the Bible, and how we are to understand it, is known as the “sufficiency of Scripture.” The sufficiency of Scripture can be simply defined as follows: In the Bible alone, God has given humanity all things that are necessary for the proper understanding of who He is, who we are, how He has acted in the past, and what He expects from us.

The basic idea behind the sufficiency of Scripture is that nothing else needs to be revealed to the human race about God, or His plan for the human race. The Bible is the record of all of the things that God thought we needed to know about Him. In other words, the Scriptures are complete and sufficient for belief and behavior. Nothing needs to be added to them!

The following points need to be made about the sufficiency of Scripture.

1. THE BIBLE ALONE HAS THE ANSWERS TO LIFE’S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

The Bible contains the things, which God thought that we humans should know, on a number of different topics. His teaching on any subject is sufficient for us. In other words, we do not have to go elsewhere to find answers. The Bible says the faith has been once-and-for-all entrusted to believers. Jude wrote:

Dear friends, although I have been eager to write to you about our common salvation, I now feel compelled instead to write to encourage you to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3 New English Translation).

Consequently, people are able to search the Bible for themselves and find out the important truths about God in its pages. His Word is enough.

For example, the Bible alone holds the key to salvation from sin. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15 ESV).

Paul emphasizes that it is from the Bible alone that we learn that forgiveness of sins must come through Jesus Christ. We do not have to look elsewhere for answers concerning how we are to be saved from sin.

James confirmed that God used the words found in Scripture to bring the message of salvation or the “new birth.” He wrote:

He wanted us to be his own special people, and so he sent the true message to give us new birth (James 1:18 Contemporary English Version).

Therefore, the Holy Scripture provides us everything that we need to know about the central questions of life. It alone is where we go to find the answers.

2. EVERYTHING THAT WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GOD HAS BEEN REVEALED TO US: NOT EVERYTHING WE MAY WANT TO KNOW

While the Scriptures contain everything humanity needs to know about God, it does not reveal everything that we may desire to know. The truth that God has revealed in the Bible is sufficient, but it is not exhaustive. There are many things that God has not told us. Moses wrote:

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 29:29 NIV).

Therefore, many things about God are still unknown to us.

3. THE INFORMATION ABOUT GOD WAS SUFFICIENT AT ALL STAGES OF HUMAN HISTORY

Through the various stages of human history, God has given His people sufficient information to believe in Him. They always have had enough information to know that He existed, as well as what He required from them. Consequently, the human race was never left in the dark about God's existence, or how He expected them to behave.

For example, Adam and Eve were given insight into future salvation from sin. The Book of Genesis says God gave the following words of punishment to the serpent who tempted Eve:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel (Genesis 3:15 NIV).

The offspring of the woman would be Jesus Christ—the Savior.

Later, we read of Cain and Abel. They each were commanded to bring an offering to the Lord:

At harvesttime Cain brought to the LORD a gift of his farm produce, while Abel brought several choice lambs from the best of his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his offering (Genesis 4:3-4 NLT).

They realized that some payment was necessary for sin. The Lord said to Cain:

You will be accepted if you respond in the right way. But if you refuse to respond correctly, then watch out! Sin is waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must subdue it (Genesis 4:7 NLT).

Before Jesus Christ came into the world, people were saved by looking forward to His coming. After listing a number of godly characters from the Old Testament, the writer to the Hebrews put it this way:

Every one of those people died. But they still had faith, even though they had not received what they had been promised. They were glad just to see these things from far away, and they agreed that they were only strangers and foreigners on this earth (Hebrews 11:13 CEV).

They died “in faith” looking forward to the promises of God. In fact, we are told that Moses “suffered for Christ.” We read the following in Hebrews:

He [Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward (Hebrews 11:26 ESV).

Jesus said Abraham looked forward to seeing His day. We read Him saying the following in the Gospel of John:

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Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad (John 8:56 NLT).

While their knowledge was limited, they were still able to act in faith towards God's promises. They had saving faith without knowing the exact details of Jesus Christ's sinless life, His death, and resurrection from the dead.

The key is that they trusted God's words. It is clear that their knowledge was sufficient to act in faith toward God. Therefore, we find that Scripture has always been adequate to meet the needs of the people.

4. WE DO NOT NEED SOME AUTHORITY FIGURE TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE FOR US

Sometimes it is argued that Scriptures are not clear in-and-of-themselves. Thus, believers need some type of external authority to properly interpret and understand its teaching. This may come from some church, a creed, or the teaching of some church leader.

However, the facts speak otherwise. The Bible is able to be understood by the great majority of the people. Every believer should study the Scriptures for themselves. Nowhere do we find the Scripture telling believers that they should only listen to some special spiritual leader to know the truth.

5. GOD WOULD NOT GIVE US A CONFUSED REVELATION

There is something else. It is unreasonable to say, as some have done, that God would give humanity a revelation of Himself that could not be understood by the masses.

To the contrary, the Bible is written in such a way that people in every age are able to understand it. Jesus made this point clear when He spoke about the nature of God the Father:

Which one of you fathers would give your hungry child a snake if the child asked for a fish? (Luke 11:11 CEV).

The answer of course is none! If earthly fathers look after their own children, then how much more does our heavenly Father look after us!

Humanity needs a clear Word from God. God, who is compared to a loving Father, gives only good things to His children. Therefore, He would not give us a confused, or contradictory, revelation of Himself.

6. THE CREEDS AND CHURCH COUNCILS ARE INSUFFICIENT TO ESTABLISH TRUTH

Although some claim that creeds, belief statements, or the conclusions of church councils, are alternatives to Scripture, they cause more problems than they solve. Creeds and councils, no matter how orthodox, are still the pronouncements of human beings. There is no guarantee that any pronouncements they make are to be considered infallible.

The Holy Scripture alone contains all things necessary for believers. There is no need for anything to be added to them. They are sufficient.

7. JESUS ASSUMED THAT THE SCRIPTURES WERE SUFFICIENT TO ANSWER OUR QUESTIONS

The answers to the basic problems that humanity faces, such as our identity, purpose, and destiny, can be found in the pages of Scripture. Jesus acknowledged that the religious leaders of His day did indeed search the Scriptures to find answers to these questions. He said:

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You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life (John 5:39,40 NRSV).

While Jesus condemned the religious leaders for a number of their practices, He did not condemn them for searching the Scriptures.

It is interesting to note that the King James Version is different from other English translations here. It reads this as a command of Jesus—not merely a statement of what they were doing. It says:

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me (John 5:39 KJV).

The translation of the King James Version is possible—the Greek text can be read either as a command “search the Scriptures” or as a statement of that which they were already doing “you search the Scriptures.”

Either way, the point is the same, the Scriptures need to be searched!

8. PAUL EMPHASIZED THAT EACH BELIEVER SHOULD THOROUGHLY SEARCH THE SCRIPTURE FOR ANSWERS

Like Jesus, the Apostle Paul emphasized that people should thoroughly search the Scriptures. He wrote the following to Timothy:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15 NRSV).

The Scripture is the “word of truth.” The reason the Scripture should be studied is because it is God’s divinely inspired Word. Paul also wrote to Timothy:

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NRSV).

According to Paul, those who study the Scripture can be thoroughly equipped for “every good work.” Scripture is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. We need nothing else to live the Christian life.

9. THE BIBLE HAS PROVED SUFFICIENT FOR US

We also should note that Scriptures have proved themselves to be sufficient. Those who read and study the Bible discover that the Scripture provides everything necessary to understand the plan of God and live a godly life. Peter wrote:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness (2 Peter 1:3 NIV).

The psalmist equates God’s blessing with obeying His Word. He wrote:

Our Lord, you bless everyone who lives right and obeys your Law (Psalm 119:1 CEV).

This is a further indication that obedience to God consists of obeying His Word.

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Therefore, the Bible itself is sufficient for human beings to know who God is, and what He wants from humanity. Consequently, nothing needs to be added to Scripture.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FROM THE DOCTRINE THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

The doctrine of the sufficiency of the Bible has a number of important implications for believers. They include the following.

WE CAN FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD ALONE

Because the Bible contains sufficient answers to our deepest questions, we can make it our focus to find these ultimate answers. There is nowhere else that we must go.

Therefore, we do not have to spend our time finding out what various Christians leaders, or church councils, have said on a particular topic. Any conclusions they may have reached cannot be considered as either authoritative or infallible. It is only the Bible that is completely trustworthy.

Consequently, nothing outside of the Scripture has any binding authority over believers. We are not obliged to obey any command or teaching of any "Christian" group if it is not either explicitly or implicitly taught in the Bible. Guidance will come from God's Word—not from the commands or suggestions of others.

WE CAN EVALUATE EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE

The fact that the Scriptures are sufficient does not mean that we ignore what others have written or have said in the past. Indeed, it simply means that whatever they have said must be evaluated in light of Scripture. We do not disregard what others have taught on particular topics, but we do evaluate their words in light of our only trustworthy source—the Bible. While the conclusions of others may be helpful, they are not authoritative in any sense of the word.

HOW THIS RELATES TO OUR STUDY OF LAST DAYS BIBLE PROPHECY

In sum, understanding the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is crucial in our study of last days Bible prophecy. Too often, we are told that we need the Bible as well as something else to understand the times in which we are living. However, as we have observed from Scripture itself, the Bible is indeed all that we need.

Let us not, therefore, attempt to go outside of Scripture in a desire to understand what is taking place in our world with respect to the time of the end. The Bible gives us all of the answers that we need!