

Time-Boundness of Scripture-2

Christ and the Scriptures

A writer in the *Expository Times* of 1896-97 already said in his day: "The real subject of dispute has been the limitation of Christ's knowledge." Our discussion on the "time-boundness" of Scripture should concentrate therefore on the question of our Lord's knowledge.

Critics often say that when Jesus Christ defended the Old Testament or used it, He was merely accommodating Himself to the prevailing religious opinions. The text for this thesis is Luke 2:52 which says that Christ grew in knowledge. Surely that implies His ignorance. And if this is so, why not His ignorance with regards to the Old Testament? Jesus imagined like any Jew of His day that Moses wrote the books that bear his name and believed, with childlike Jewish belief of His day, the literal interpretation. Jesus accepted the story of Jonah as factual and believed in a literal Adam and Eve since He was "time-bound." But such hypothesis offends the evidence of Scriptures. To Jesus, what the Scriptures said, God said. The theory of accommodation does not fit the facts. When Jesus spoke, "He taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes." From their scribes the Jewish people were used to receive teaching, but it was teaching based on "the law and the prophets." But Jesus stood apart and taught differently. "For," He declared, "I spake not from Myself, but the Father which sent me; He hath given Me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak. The things, therefore, which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto Me, so I speak" (Joh , 12:45f). We should not forget that Jesus did not only claim that the very substance of His teaching was divine but the very language in which it was conveyed. In his high priestly prayer He said: "I have given them the words which Thou gavest Me" (John 17:8). Jesus claimed that His words were the words of God and conveyed divine and eternal truth. Jesus, while on earth, was still united with His Father. Jesus and God the Father were one in teaching as well as in essence. "For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment what to say and to speak" (John 12:49). "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works" (John 14:10). "The word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me." (John 5:24). Edward John Carnell rightly said: "There is only one consistent position for the church. Since Jesus received His doctrine from the Father, everything that Jesus says is true on divine authority. And another position leads to skepticism" (p. 40. *The Case for Orthodox Theology*).

Christ claimed to have come in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. "His whole ministry," as Dr. Packer says, "may justly be described as a prolonged and many-sided affirmation of the authority of the Old Testament." (p. 57. *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*. Jesus told the congregation in Nazareth that He was proclaiming His message in fulfillment of Scripture (Luke 4:18f. quoting the Greek version of Isaiah 61:1f). Matthew says that He healed in fulfillment of Scripture (Matt. 8:16 f. quoting the Greek version of Isaiah 53:4). Jesus told His disciples that His forthcoming death and resurrection would

be in fulfilment of Scripture. As soon as Peter had confessed Jesus as Messiah at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus "began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and . . . be killed, and after three days rise again" (Matt. 16:21).. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished" (Luke 18:31). It is correctly maintained today by the British theologian Packer in the tradition of the historic Christian faith that: "The fact we have to face is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, who claimed divine authority for all that He did and taught, both confirmed the absolute authority of the Old Testament for others and submitted to it unreservedly Himself" (p. 55. *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*).

The Apostles and the Scriptures

How did the apostles view Scripture? When you read the epistles you must say in all fairness that they did have the same view of Scripture as Jesus Christ. "All Scripture," says Paul, "is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16 f.) With these words Paul described nothing but the whole body of Old Testament writings. The apostle Peter also assigns complete authority to the written Scriptures: "And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

Modern critics dispute the authority of the apostles. A classical passage for discussion is Romans 5:12: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rev. Delleman calls this parallel Adam-Christ a regular recurring theme in rabbinical theology. Paul was very much at home in this theology (cf. pp. 83f. Th. Delleman / P.R. Wiepkema. *Wording van Mens en Wereid*). Modern commentators say that a literal Adam, who lived in space and time, cannot be accepted. Science and anthropology have shown and proved that there never was a first Adam. But Paul cannot be blamed for not knowing this. The apostle was ignorant about such scientific matters. Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones commented on this hypothesis: "For myself; if I accepted such a position, I would then feel bound logically to go further and ask something like this: `What about this idea that Christ died for my sins, that He was set forth to be a propitiation for me? Is not that typical Rabbinical teaching also? Is not that just Paul the old Pharisee, coming back into operation again? It is but another example of Paul foisting his ideas, his erroneous ideas upon us" (pp. 219f. of *Romans. An Exposition chapter 5. Assurance*).

Is Paul, in Romans 5:12, simply voicing the thought pattern of his uninspired fellow countrymen as to the entrance of sin into our human race? The answer from history is "No." Dr. Edersheim says: "So far as their opinions can be gathered from their writings, the great doctrines of original sin and the sinfulness of our whole nature were not held by the ancient Rabbis (P. 165 *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 1). Weber thus summarized the Jewish view as expressed in the Talmud: "By the fall man came under a curse, is guilty of death, and his right relation to God is rendered difficult. More than

this cannot be said. Sin, to which the bent and leaning had already been planted by creation, had become a fact, the evil impulse (cormalignum, 4 Es. 3:21) gained the mastery over mankind, who can on-ly resist it by the greatest efforts before the fall it had power over him but no such ascendancy" (AILsyn. Theol. p. 216. cf. pp. 25ff. Fundamentals. Vo.. III. Los Angeles, 1917). The Bible itself leaves no room for this "time-bound" concept. Without any hesitation the apostle Paul accepts the Scriptures of the Old Testament as God's Words. You never find a contrast between the human and divine elements. In Romans 1:1f. Paul calls himself "an apostle separated unto the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures." The believers are saved through the gospel. The gospel of Christ "is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1: 16). The gospel has to be kept as Paul proclaimed it. He makes it perfectly clear that the whole of his message has to be accepted. The gospel does not know any "time-boundness" or wrappings. Paul said: "Christ died for our sins ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES . . . He arose again the third day ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES" (I Cor. 15:3f). The Old Testament Scriptures are "able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). In Acts 3:21 the apostle Peter says that God has spoken by the mouth of His prophets.

What if we would accept the modern teaching on Romans 5:12 ? We would have become reductionists. If we have to sit in judgment and sift what is "time-bound" or not, what is applicable for us today or not, then we have arrived at some very shaky foundations for our Christian faith. I certainly agree with Dr. Jones when he said: "In the end it would come to this, that the Gospel is what I think it ought to be: and I am the ultimate authority. I take out this section, and I eliminate another. Of another section, I say, 'that is correct and I accept it' This attitude obviously means that I set myself up as the authority; not big enough to be an authority: I am too fallible to be an authority. No man is capable of being such an authority. I either submit to the authority of Scriptures or else I am in a morass where there is no standing" (P. 221. Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones *Romans. An Exposition of Chapter 5. Assurance*).

If we accept the not so modern view that Scripture is "time-bound" we start sailing on dangerous waters; man himself becomes the authority. The church should stick to the authority of Scripture and listen carefully to what it has to say. We should think and live in accordance to the Word of God. If we accept the "time-boundness" of Scripture our Christian faith and Christian ethic would soon be gone. The church would no longer be able to appeal to Scripture for a norm of behaviour and for an authoritative word from the Lord. The Word of God is different from the Word of man. The Westminster Confession, I, iv sums it up so beautifully: "The authority of the holy Scriptures, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God."

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