

Pathfinders

"How We Got the Bible"

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Our focus in this last investigation of the Biblical canon is the witness of the New Testament (NT) to the authority of Scripture. The many and diverse witnesses of the NT can be broadly summarized in three divisions.

I. The NT clearly testifies to the divine inspiration of the Old Testament (OT).

Throughout the OT, "It is written" recurs as a technical reference to God's inspired revelation; this same phrase occurs likewise throughout the NT with reference to the OT. Paul commences Romans with reference to the gospel "proclaimed beforehand through God's prophets in the holy Scriptures" (1:2; similarly. Matt 15:4; 19:15). In Gal 3:8, 22, Paul actually *personifies* Scripture, identifying it with God himself. Similarly, the NT speaks of David's words in the Psalms as words of the *Spirit* (Matt 22:43; Mark 12:36; Acts 1:16); the prophets speak through the *Spirit* (Acts 28:25; 1 Pet 1:11; 2 Pet 1:21), and Hebrews, in particular, identifies OT citations as words of the *Spirit* (Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15). The revelation passed down from the tradition of the Old Covenant forms the foundation for the New Covenant.

II. The Apostle Paul declares that "all Scripture is inspired by God."

The word for "inspired" in 2 Tim 3:16 is a new word coined by Paul. It is a wordplay on Gen 2:7, where "God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." As God "inspires" inanimate earth to become animate *human life*, so God inspires human words to become *divine words* of eternal life.

III. The NT attests to Jesus Christ as the *fulfillment* of the OT hope and the final authority by which all prior revelation is to be understood.

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), Jesus repeatedly quotes a divine command from Israel and then gives its fuller interpretation on the basis of *his* authority, "But I say unto you . . ." Jesus is the new and final norm of understanding the revelation of God in Scripture. The NT attests to Jesus as the *fulfillment* of divine revelation. "All things on earth and in heaven are summed up in Christ" (Eph 1:10). The Gospel of Luke concludes with the resurrection Christ 1) interpreting the meaning of his life, death, and resurrection (24:25-26), identifying the three divisions of the OT (Moses, prophets, writings), all of which bear witness to him (24:27, 44), that Jesus "opens" the Scriptures for their saving revelation (24:32), and that Jesus opens the minds of his disciples to understanding the Scriptures (24:45).

Thought for the week: "Imitate the lives of good people as much as you can; and when you fall short, at least rejoice with them, and congratulate those who are better than you" (Cyprian, d. 258).