

JESUS AFFIRMS THAT ONLY BIBLE BOOKS ARE TO BE TREATED AS REVELATION FROM GOD IN A SERIOUS WAY

The Catholics say that the Bible and tradition are both God's word. Protestantism says only the Bible is God's word.

Matthew 15:1-12 has Jesus protesting against Jewish tradition indicating that scripture alone has authority from God. An example he used was when the Jews annulled the command to honour your father and mother by allowing a man who dedicated all his money to God, that is the Temple, to let them do without. The latter was a rule from tradition and the Jewish traditions were believed by them to come from Moses or another prophet for the Jews never taught that it was right to contradict God. They thought God made the honour your father rule but like any rule there could be exceptions just like God allowed killing of homosexuals and adulterers though he forbade taking life. The Law itself makes exceptions within itself. So Jesus condemned the rule that you could leave your parents wanting for the sake of giving your money for God DESPITE it not being intended to contradict the word of God and despite it being understood as complementing and explaining the word of God and it being thought to be the word of God itself in some sense. The claim of some that the rule about the money allowed a man to keep the money to himself though it belonged to the Temple bears no relevance. That is an abuse of the rule. If a man vowed his money to the Temple he had no right to use it himself. Jesus does not mention the abuse. He has the men who did not abuse the rule but gave their money to the Temple in mind for why would he talk as if he never meant the abusers? He doesn't give that impression that they were what was in his head.

Jesus was against traditions that allegedly agreed with the word of God or interpreted it for you. Jesus picked one example. But what about the vast majority of Jewish traditions that were easy to keep and seemed reasonable? He condemned all the traditions across the board. This means that only scripture alone should be regarded as the authority that requires obedience. Jesus then plainly told us that the doctrines of Rome, like priests having powers and praying to Mary, are heresies. We must ignore tradition no matter how reliable it seems and listen to the written word of God. By implication, if the Old and New Testaments are scripture as Christianity teaches then we must obey them alone.

The Jewish leaders followed both tradition and the Old Testament scriptures. The Catholic Mass comes from Catholic tradition for there is no evidence that priests have the power to offer the sacrifice of the Mass from the Bible. In Matthew 23:2,3 Jesus tells the people to obey the scribes and the Pharisees and all they teach but not to copy them. Jesus then here was encouraging their tradition as well for that was a part of their religious practice and they were strict about it. But in Matthew 15 he said that they taught the ideas of men as doctrines from God and if they contradict the word of God with their tradition they prefer their tradition instead and condemned this as evil. How can these two assertions be made to fit together?

Two answers are possible.

Jesus meant that you obey the scribes and Pharisees even when they teach false doctrine for it is safer to listen to them than not to for now and this is expediency and not an indication that tradition is good or safe.

Jesus meant that you obey the scribes and the Pharisees as long as they explain the scriptures, the Old Testament, but not their traditions.

Neither answer allows us to make tradition equal to the Bible.

The scribes and Pharisees were only adhering to traditions they didn't make themselves. There was every reason why they thought the traditions must be the word of God too for just because something is tradition doesn't mean it's wrong. Then the Catholic can't argue, "When Jesus condemned tradition he condemned them for making things up as they went along not tradition like our Catholic tradition that has been handed down from previous generations for the Church can't be blamed for making them up now even if it has done."

Most of the traditions were not inventions but reasoned from the Old Testament. Jesus was not condemning the Jewish traditions because he thought they were wrong. They couldn't have been all wrong. What he was against was making human reasoning and interpretation equal to the authority of the Old Testament scriptures. The Roman Catholic Church certainly teaches that its own tradition is equal to the Bible, Old and New Testaments both. And it claims that much of this tradition is just what was practiced from the start of the Church and was not reasoned or developed from embryonic and undeveloped doctrines in the Bible. If Jesus condemned traditions created as deductions from scripture how much more would he condemn traditions from the constant practice of the Church? And the Church knows fine well that that the

doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and her assumption into Heaven and prayers to saints to saints a few cannot even be traced to the first few generations after the apostles never mind the apostles themselves even though the Church claims that God stopped revealing his word with the death of the last apostle. The Church has made it binding irrevocable dogma that it doesn't give new revelations but claims it only clarifies existing revelation. That is a bare-faced lie.

Some say it was different for the Catholic Church to have and follow tradition and declare it equal to the Bible for unlike the Jews Catholicism is blessed with infallibility and Christ promised to look after his Church forever. But Catholicism doesn't use its infallibility much. It was only used three times in the twentieth century when Pius XI declared contraception wrong, Pius XII said that Mary was assumed into Heaven and John Paul II declared that the Church had no authority to ordain women. Most Catholic tradition is still out there circulating around without the full stamp of infallibility.

In Luke 16, Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus to drive home the point that only the Bible is needed to get the word of God. The rich man goes to Hell to feel the torment of fire forever and Lazarus is saved and happy. The rich man's pain is so bad that he madly desires a mere drop of water on his tongue. He asks for Lazarus to be raised from the dead to warn his brothers about the torment of Hell so that they might be avoided. He is told that his brothers don't need anybody to rise from the dead for they have the Law and the Prophets. So the Old Testament is sufficient. Catholics say this means the Bible shouldn't have the New Testament if the Old Testament is enough. So does that entitle them to ignore what Jesus taught? The New Testament claims that its message is in the Old Testament and that the gospel is in it. All the New Testament does is bring that out but it is not necessary. Nevertheless it is the word of God too according to non-Catholic Christianity which has no problem in accepting anything in this paragraph.

To stress the point that only the Old Testament is enough Jesus says that somebody rising from the dead to persuade bad people to repent is a waste of time when they have the scriptures. Then they have no excuse. He is saying he will not send visions and miracles to persuade people to turn to God. He will not send them even to draw people to the scriptures. That is people's own affair. Anybody then that does not study with and learn from the scriptures will be held accountable for it. Jesus is saying that the scriptures stand for themselves without miracles to draw attention to them and or verify them.

Would that suggest that we have a memory here of a tradition that Jesus never did miracles? I think so. But Christians would say that Jesus is saying his miracles were predicted in the Old Testament. Therefore he is only doing them to obey and uphold the Old Testament. They would have to argue then that miracles such as those of Lourdes and Fatima and Medjugorje and Garabandal, in short the miracles reported by the Catholic Church are not prophesied. They would have to conclude that these miracles are precisely the kind of miracles Jesus said are useless and therefore not from God. They are as useless as raising Lazarus from the dead to plead with sinners to repent.

When Jesus said even a saint rising from the dead with God's message is useless and not even worth thinking about when the scriptures are there we know that he indicated that less impressive things such as tradition and miracles of healing and apparitions are even more useless and beneath divine dignity. By doing them God would be denying the sufficiency of the scriptures.

John 20:31 says that the Gospel of John alone is enough for salvation and belief in Jesus. The verse goes, "Jesus did many other miraculous wonders in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book. But I have written of the other signs so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God so that by believing you may have life in his name". In other words, it gives enough evidence for one to base belief on and be saved by that belief coupled with repentance. When John is enough and when John appeals to other scripture, but only from the Bible, as scripture it implies that there is no need for anything outside the Bible. Catholics say this interpretation infers that no Bible book is needed but the gospel of John. But there is no problem with that. John can be taken as a summary of the important and essential Bible teachings. God can give us extra information if he wants and that is what he is supposed to have done by providing us with the other Bible books. The Bible might be sufficient for our salvation but that does not mean that it cannot repeat itself and contain material we don't need for salvation.

When the gospel of John is enough by itself, that shows the Bible is enough by itself. The Bible is enough but more than what we need. What we definitely do not need is a Church and pope and Church tradition that claim to be infallible!

There are problems with Bible alone but we cannot argue from that that it shows the Bible does not expect us to take it as the only authority.



