

The Authority of the Scriptures in The Book of Acts

By

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*“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”
(Matt: 4:4).*

All Scripture in this book is quoted from the Authorized King James Bible.

The Authority of the Scriptures In the Book of Acts

Upon a recent reading through the book of Acts, I had my attention drawn to an emphasis on the great doctrine of the authority of the Scriptures. Again and again, the issue was raised. Upon further readings, I noted 93 passages referring distinctly to the Scriptures. These dealt with four general themes:

1. Inspiration
2. Preservation
3. Sufficiency, and
4. Power of the Word

These 93 passages were then compared in four English versions:

1. KJV
2. NIV (1973)
3. NIV (1984), and
4. NWT

The two different New International Versions seemed identical except in three places. The following observations were made on the latter

three versions agreement with the King James Version.

	<u>NWT</u>	<u>NIV</u>
Same as KJV	8	7
*Similar to KJV	48	31
Changes	37	55
Changes of NIV/NWT being alike	15 – 17	'73' '84'
Closer of Two To KJV	30	8

**Similar does not mean the same.*

Two of the three changes in the NIV (1973, 1984) brought the NIV more in line with the NWT.

There is not enough evidence to prove anything, but certainly enough to alert a school teacher to the appearance of plagiarism (17.2% overall alike and 66.7% of revisions). It would seem that the NWT was on hand and considered for word choice as

well as text meaning by the NIV translators and revisers. It also appears that the NIV translators wanted to go further astray from the KJV than had the Jehovah Witnesses ... at least on the subject of Biblical Authority in the book of Acts (by a ratio of 30:8).

Diagramming of the 93 passages would show the errors of changing "the" to "our", nouns to verbs, added words, deleted words, changed words (prepositions etc), "word" to "message", "preach" to "told" or "proclaimed" etc.

The use of the dynamic equivalent is the basis of much gossip. A simple statement retold in a similar but different equivalent, then repeated as equivalently understood soon produces a statement radically altered from the original. As pastors, we can face real problems with people who repeat stories that are not literally and verbally accurate. We don't appreciate people dynamically changing our statements. God doesn't appreciate it either.

The book of Acts opens with a statement affirming that it is built on the foundation of previous Scriptures, that is, the Gospel of Luke. "Treatise"

is one of the titles for the Scriptures found in the book of Acts.

INSPIRATION

Inspiration is the first theme given in Acts on the teaching of the Authority of the Scriptures. It is abundantly clear that the Bible was given by inspiration of God (both verbally – each word, and plenary – all equally inspired).

In chapter 1 and verse 2, we see that Jesus spoke through the Holy Ghost. In verse 16, Peter, in the upper room, makes the simple statement, *“This scripture ... which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake.”* This scripture was not David speaking, but the Holy Ghost speaking by the mouth of David. These were God’s actual words, not just thoughts, principles, concepts, etc.

Peter, preaching in the temple (3:18), stated, *“God ... by the mouth of all His prophets”*. Again, the process and degree of inspiration are simply stated. The fulfillment was one of actual words – God given words. (This truth is mentioned 3808 different times in the Bible.) Later, after the

disciples were examined and warned by the temple council, they joined in pray. "*God ... Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said*" (4:24, 25). Such was the understanding and belief of the early Church in the early chapters of Acts. These men had been taught by Jesus directly. This was still the belief in the book of Acts to the last. Acts 28:25, "*Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers.*" There was no room left for thought, concept, paraphrase, dynamic equivalence, or other changes to satisfy man's desires. It was verbally inspired. Each word was from God.

Not only was the Bible verbally inspired, but it was also given by plenary inspiration; that is, it was all equally inspired. None is more or less inspired than any other part. The three divisions of the Old Testament (by Jewish definition) were all quoted and given as fully inspired. They are mentioned by name in the book of Acts as the Psalms, the Prophets, and the Law. Moses, Samuel, David, Joel, Isaiah, and all the prophets are clearly given in Acts with their direct quotes on an even level of inspiration. They are God's words,

and equally inspired. Sixteen titles mentioned some 77 times help us to understand the authority of the inspired scriptures. *Notice the frequency of each title's usage:*

1. Treatise = 1
2. Counsel of God = 1
3. Moses = 3
4. Law = 19
5. Scriptures = 7
6. Promise = 4
7. The Prophets = 9
8. Word of God = 12
9. The Word = 9
10. Word of the Lord = 6
11. That Word = 1
12. Word of His Grace = 1
13. Word of the Gospel = 1
14. Word of the Lord Jesus = 1
15. Words of the Prophets = 1
16. Words of the Lord Jesus = 1

PRESERVATION

Preservation of the Scriptures simply means that what God gave – God kept pure. There is to be no

doubt about the Scriptures still being pure. Such was the view of the early Church.

“Words of the prophets” (15:15) and *“words of the Lord Jesus”* (20:35) show that the actual words had been preserved and were available and used. This was in keeping with the teaching of Jesus that *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matt. 4:4). Actual words, every word for our use and living, were preserved and kept pure. Not only do titles emphasize this with the use of “words”, but seven other titles use “word”, It is not the thought, concept, doctrine, principle, etc. that was preserved, but the actual words.

The multitude of quotes from the Old Testament throughout the book of Acts show the early Church’s absolute confidence in the original words having been preserved. Neither Jesus, nor any early Christian, ever suggested otherwise. Rather, they were convinced of the preserved precise words of God, and based their ministry upon this conviction.

SUFFICIENCY

The sufficiency of Scripture would show us that in itself it is enough, adequate for the job, and relevant to all men everywhere at all times. We don't need something to add to the Scriptures in order to reach the souls of men. Read and consider, "*Paul, as his manner was ... reasoned with them out of the Scriptures*" (17:2). Even Paul brought no new revelation to the discussion. Jewish history and writings many centuries old from the Middle East were sufficient to reach Modern Greece in Europe. Cultural, geographical, political, racial, national or time changes were not needed. The Scriptures were sufficient to lay the foundation of a new church in less than a month in the city of Thessalonica.

When Paul made his defense before King Agrippa he reiterated his confidence in the sufficiency of the Scriptures, "*saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come*" (26:22b). Paul limited himself to the Scriptures. They were adequate and relevant for his ministry.

The nobility of the Bereans was their confidence in the Scriptures being sufficient. *"They received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* (17:11b). They could have easily said with our spiritual forefathers. **"Sola Scripterel!"** – The Scriptures alone.

Consider Stephens message to the Temple Council in chapter 7. It is made up mostly of Old Testament quotes (vss. 2-50). Was it adequate to speak to these theologians? They were cut to the heart. The Sword of the Spirit is still quick and powerful, – well able to do what is needed.

POWER

"The Word of God grew and multiplied" (12:24). It was not an increase in volume but rather in effect in the lives of man. It was not an addition of paragraphs and pages, but dominance and influence among the people. Their thoughts and actions were swayed. Their goals and motives were directed. Their morals and relationships were changed. The mighty Word of God was working in power.

A parallel passage is found (19:20), "*So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed.*" The spread of God's Word allowed it to work in power. Atheism had to flee. Paganism lost its control. Empty religion was exposed. Error was rejected. The Scriptures triumphed and prevailed. They became the reigning influence in soul after soul until the community was affected. The Bible has the power to do the same today.

SUMMATION

The Scriptures, as seen in Acts, are the authority because they were given by God, kept by God, used by God, and blessed by God. They are called His commandment(s) and His promise(s). For the early Church they were the place of reference, the foundation of actions, the basis of messages, and the theme of their ministry (6:4). The Scriptures were the supreme and singular outstanding authority with 93 references and dozens of Old Testament quotes. Modern versions, theories of inspiration and preservation and pseudo-scholarship would try to rob us of these basic truths. The Scriptures themselves are the most eloquent defense and commentary on this doctrine.