

THE COURTROOM OF UNDERSTANDING



How to Hear the Voice of God
Through the Holy Scriptures

TEACHING BY
APWATCH.ORG

THE WITNESSES

THE LAW
THE PROPHETS
THE PSALMS
THE GOSPELS
THE APOSTLES

SCRIPTURE IS
THE JUDGE.
OUR INTERPRETATION
STANDS EXAMINATION.
TRUTH IS THE KEY.
CHRIST OPENS
THE SCRIPTURES.
THE SPIRIT
GIVES UNDERSTANDING.

TWO OR THREE
WITNESSES

TESTIFYING TO
THE SAME
REALITY

TORAH

PROPHETS

PSALMS

SCRIPTURE:
THE AUTHORITY

THE KEYS OF
UNDERSTANDING
ARE FOUND IN
THE TRUTH



THE APOSTOLIC PROPHETIC WATCH
WATCH TEST WITNESS

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The Courtroom of Understanding

How to Hear the Voice of God Through the Holy Scriptures

The Apostolic Prophetic Watch

Watch. Test. Witness.

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Introduction - Can We Hear God and Still Misunderstand Him?

The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God.

But acknowledging the authority of Scripture and correctly understanding Scripture are not necessarily the same thing. A person may accurately quote the words that are written and yet misunderstand the Spirit and intention of the One who spoke them.

Scripture possesses authority. Our interpretation remains under examination.

The purpose of this teaching is not to diminish the letter of Scripture. The letter is holy testimony. Rather, we seek to learn how to hear the eternal God speaking through the testimony He has given us.

We enter what we will call: The Courtroom of Understanding. Here, Scripture is not placed on trial. Our understanding is.

The authority of Holy Scripture is the Judge. Our interpretation stands before that authority. Two or three non-contradictory witnesses must testify to the same reality. The keys of understanding are found in Truth. Once the Law and the Prophets have established Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, we allow Christ Himself to open our understanding of the testimony that pointed toward Him.

I. Why Does God Speak?

Before asking how to interpret God's Word, we should ask a more foundational question: Why does God speak at all? God desires to be known by His creation.

“But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me...”

— **Jeremiah 9:24**

“For they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them...”

— **Jeremiah 31:34**

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God...”

— **John 17:3**

God's revelation therefore cannot be reduced merely to the communication of religious information. God reveals Himself. Scripture reveals His character, His judgments, His mercy, His purposes and ultimately His personhood.

II. Scripture as Relationship

Scripture repeatedly describes God's relationship with humanity through intensely personal language. He is Father. His people are children. Abraham is called the friend of God.

"I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

— **John 15:15**

Notice the connection: Friendship -> making known. God also presents the relationship through Bridegroom and Bride.

"For thy Maker is thine husband..."

— **Isaiah 54:5**

"as a chaste virgin to Christ."

— **2 Corinthians 11:2**

"the marriage of the Lamb."

— **Revelation 19:7**

We may therefore understand Scripture relationally: not merely as legislation from a distant ruler, but as testimony within God's continuing revelation of Himself to His creation. There is something resembling courtship within that testimony. The Bridegroom is making Himself known to the Bride.

III. Know the Speaker Before Interpreting His Speech

"God is a Spirit..."

— **John 4:24**

"from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

— **Psalms 90:2**

"the word of our God shall stand for ever."

— **Isaiah 40:8**

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

— **Matthew 24:35**

Therefore the Speaker is eternal. His Word is eternal. Creation exists within time, space and matter, but the One speaking precedes creation itself.

The eternal Word may enter a temporal form without being exhausted by that form.

IV. The Incarnation Demonstrates the Principle

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

— John 1:1

“All things were made by him...”

— John 1:3

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...”

— John 1:14

The eternal Word enters flesh. The invisible becomes visible. The eternal enters history. Yet the Word does not thereby become merely temporal.

“Whom God hath raised up... because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”

— Acts 2:24

Death could not hold Him. The resurrection becomes a tremendous testimony concerning the nature of the Word. The temporal manifestation could enter death, but death could not extinguish the eternal Life manifested through it.

“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.”

— 1 Corinthians 15:44

“this mortal must put on immortality.”

— 1 Corinthians 15:53

The resurrection does not abolish form. It reveals that the eternal reality cannot be confined by mortality.

V. The Letter Is Holy - But Our Understanding Is Not Infallible

We are not saying that Scripture is evil.

“thy word is truth.”

— John 17:17

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God...”

— 2 Timothy 3:16

The letter is holy testimony. But our interpretation of that testimony can be wrong.

“which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest...”

— 2 Peter 3:16

The problem is therefore not God's Word. The problem can exist in the understanding receiving God's Word.

The letter united with truthful spiritual understanding becomes testimony.

The letter interpreted through lowered, natural understanding can become adversarial - not because God's Word is evil, but because our interpretation can make God's own testimony appear to testify against His actual character.

VI. Yea, Hath God Said?

“Yea, hath God said...?”

— Genesis 3:1

The serpent does not begin by denying God's existence. The conflict concerns God's speech. What did God say? What does God's saying mean?

“God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it...”

— Genesis 3:3

Yet the recorded command in Genesis 2:17 concerns eating. The phrase 'neither shall ye touch it' does not occur in the recorded command. Something has entered the human rendering of God's speech.

Receiving God's words does not automatically guarantee that we have correctly understood God's meaning.

VII. The Adversary Can Quote Scripture

“For it is written...”

— Matthew 4:6

The adversary quotes Psalm 91. The words themselves are Scripture.

“It is written again...”

— Matthew 4:7

An accurate biblical quotation can still be given an adversarial application. The authority of Scripture was never the problem. The interpretation and application were. Jesus answers one scriptural testimony by bringing another witness into the courtroom.

VIII. The Serpent Must Be Lifted

Numbers records a remarkable event. Israel is afflicted by fiery serpents. God tells Moses to make the image of the serpent and lift it upon a pole. Those who behold it live.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”

— John 3:14

Here we must distinguish explicit Scripture from prophetic interpretation. Scripture explicitly connects: Lifted serpent -> Lifted Son of Man.

We then investigate the prophetic possibility that the serpent also illustrates God's Word encountered through lowered, earthly or adversarial understanding. The answer is not to destroy God's Word. The understanding must be raised. The natural must become spiritual. The earthly must encounter the heavenly.

“the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... because they are spiritually discerned.”

— 1 Corinthians 2:14

The Hebrew numerical correspondence provides an intriguing supporting witness: נחש - Nachash - Serpent = 358; משיח - Mashiach - Messiah = 358. This does not establish the doctrine. But after the scriptural witnesses have spoken, the correspondence becomes worthy of notice.

IX. Never Worship the Vessel

The bronze serpent gives us another warning. Many generations after Moses, Israel still possessed it.

“the children of Israel did burn incense to it...”

— 2 Kings 18:4

Hezekiah destroyed it. God had commanded its creation. God had used it. It genuinely bore testimony. Jesus Himself would later connect it with His lifting up. Yet the people eventually worshipped the sign rather than receiving its testimony.

A God-given vessel can become an idol when the vessel becomes the destination rather than the reality to which it bears witness.

“they are they which testify of me.”

— John 5:39

X. Let the Witnesses Identify Christ

We must not simply assume our interpretive authority. First, let the witnesses speak. Moses testifies. David testifies. The Prophets testify. The Psalms testify.

“For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.”

— John 5:46

“beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

— Luke 24:27

“the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”

— Luke 24:44

The witnesses establish Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ.

XI. The One Identified by the Witnesses Opens the Witnesses

“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”

— Luke 24:45

The witnesses lead us to Christ. Christ turns around and opens the witnesses. We therefore allow Jesus' words, works, judgments, mercy, death and resurrection to become foundational keys for understanding what the Law and Prophets were revealing.

“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

— John 14:9

Christ reveals the character of the Speaker.

XII. What Is the Speaker Like?

“The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth...”

— Exodus 34:6

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”

— Psalm 103:8

“The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.”

— Psalm 145:9

“he delighteth in mercy.”

— Micah 7:18

“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.”

— Ezekiel 33:11

“For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.”

— Lamentations 3:33

“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

— John 14:9

Christ does not introduce a different God. He unveils the God to whom the earlier witnesses were already testifying.

XIII. The Keys of Understanding Are Found in Truth

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

— John 14:6

“thy word is truth.”

— John 17:17

“when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.”

— John 16:13

The Word is Truth. Christ is Truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth.

A true interpretation should not require one truthful witness to destroy another truthful witness. When witnesses appear irreconcilable, we should be slow to close the case. Perhaps we have not yet discovered the Truth in which their testimony agrees.

Never force the witnesses to agree. Keep listening until you understand what they are agreeing about.

XIV. The Courtroom of Understanding

The Judge: The authority of Holy Scripture. We do not judge Scripture. Scripture judges our understanding.

“the word of God is quick, and powerful... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

— Hebrews 4:12

What Stands Examination: Our interpretation. Our traditions, assumptions, doctrines, experiences and personal revelations remain testable.

The Evidence - The Text: What has actually been written?

The Evidence - The Language: What testimony is preserved in the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek?

The Witnesses: Two or three independent, non-contradictory scriptural witnesses testifying to the same reality.

Moses may testify through Law. David through Psalm. A prophet through vision. Jesus through parable. An apostle through explanation. Different witnesses. One Reality.

The Keys: Truth. The interpretation must be reconciled in Truth rather than through the silencing of inconvenient witnesses.

Christ: Once the Law and Prophets establish Jesus as Christ, we allow Him to open their testimony.

“the Holy Ghost... shall teach you all things...”

— John 14:26

“believe not every spirit, but try the spirits...”

— 1 John 4:1

Even what we believe spiritually revealed must remain testable.

XV. Scripture Is a Mirror Before It Is a Weapon

“if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass...”

— James 1:23

The first person brought into the Courtroom of Understanding must therefore be me: my understanding, my heart, my motives, my traditions, my fears, my judgments, my interpretation.

Before asking, 'What is God saying about them?' ask, 'Father, what are You revealing about Yourself, and what are You revealing in me?'

The Word examines the hearer before the hearer uses the Word to examine his neighbour.

XVI. Watch. Test. Witness.

WATCH - Be still. Listen. Observe carefully. Do not approach Scripture merely seeking confirmation of what you already believe.

TEST - Bring your understanding into the Courtroom. Examine the text. Examine the language. Call two or three non-contradictory witnesses testifying to the same reality. Allow the Law and Prophets to lead you to Christ. Allow Christ to open their testimony. Seek the guidance of the Spirit of Truth. Do not close the case while truthful witnesses remain apparently contradictory.

WITNESS - Only after testing should we testify. And even then, we remain humble enough to be corrected.

Conclusion - He That Hath Ears to Hear

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

— Jesus, repeatedly in the Gospels

The question is not merely: Can I read the Bible? Nor merely: Can I quote the Bible? Nor even: Do I believe the Bible? The deeper question is: Can I hear the One who is speaking?

The serpent could discuss God's words. The adversary could quote Scripture. Religious scholars could search Scripture. Yet Christ still said:

“they are they which testify of me.”

— John 5:39

The goal is not to escape the letter. It is not to diminish the letter. It is not to replace Scripture with private revelation. It is to receive the holy testimony of Scripture with ears opened by the Spirit of Truth.

Scripture possesses authority. Our interpretation remains under examination.

The letter united with truthful spiritual understanding becomes testimony. The letter interpreted through lowered, natural understanding can become adversarial - not because God's Word is evil, but because our interpretation can make God's own testimony appear to testify against His actual character.

So enter the Courtroom of Understanding. Call the witnesses. Test your understanding. Seek the Truth. Let Christ open the Scriptures. Listen to the Spirit. And when the matter has been established: Bear true witness.

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