

The Doctrine of ‘God Told Me’

I meet many people who say ‘*God told me...the Spirit spoke to me...or...God gave me a vision...a dream..*.’

Are there such inspired sources other than, or distinct from, the Bible? No doubt the Holy Spirit may ‘prompt’ us to speak or act in some way, since His work is to *convict* us and *lead* us. However, what of hearing revelation from God outside of the written Word? Does ‘*the faith once delivered to the saints*’ (Jude 3) also include such revelations?

In Jude 3 the word ‘**delivered**’ is in the past tense (aorist passive) with no continuing element. The passive voice shows this body of faith was given to men *by God*. How has this been done? - through the *closed* canon of Scripture – the Bible! This canon is *complete* and hence we have the doctrine of ‘*Sola Scriptura*’, fought for by the reformers at the cost of many lives.

This ‘*faith*’ is the faith Saul tried to destroy, (Gal.1:23) and the faith that in the latter times many will depart from, (1Tim.4:1). Today, we have attacks on this faith. The range of extra-Biblical teaching and revelations including dreams and visions are too numerous to mention. One example is Charismatic/Pentecostal ‘prophecies’ claimed to be from God. Some Pentecostal leaders have in recent times attempted to marry such ‘prophecies’ with *Sola Scriptura* but it utterly defies what the reformers and the early Church Fathers taught. Prophesying in the New Testament is basically *forthtelling* the Word of God rather than *foretelling*.

In times past God spoke to us *by the prophets* (Heb.1:1), but now we have *a more sure word of prophecy* (2Pet.1:19), and that Word has been delivered unto us as *the* faith, (Jude 3). New Testament Prophecy is now declaring, expounding and *forthtelling* the word of God *already delivered*.

I was once in conversation with a professing Christian who related a series of dreams and visions supposedly given from the Lord. Most of these dreams and visions *seemed* spiritual and even Scriptural enough. Finally, one of the dreams showed the danger of accepting *any* of the previous revelations as being from God. This dream gave permission from God for a friend to marry an adherent of the Hindu religion. The marriage ended up in the salvation of the Hindu and the husband being in full time ministry. The vision was accepted as being from God and that *the ending justified the revelation*. This *pragmatic thinking* has invaded the church on a massive scale. However, in truth the vision could not have been of God because God *never* contradicts His Word *at any point or time* and will *never* add revelation to it, *despite whatever the results may be in the end!*

In the Old Testament God spoke directly to the prophets (Heb.1:1,2) and through dreams and visions. Some, in an attempt to make use of dreams and visions today, quote Joel 2:28,29: ‘*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And it shall come to pass afterward...*’ Most people fail to read the next two verses! (vs.30-32) ‘*...And I will shew wonders in the Heavens and in the Earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The Sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come...*’

The key word is back in verses 28,29 - ‘*afterward*’. After what? The exact timing is important! Matthew 24:29,30 gives us the answer: ‘*Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken: ... and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds ...*’, These events, (the *same* as in Joel), are also spoken of in Revelation 6:12 and 16:10; and the *sun* and the *moon* are similarly mentioned in Mark 13:24-27. All these events are ‘after the Tribulation’.

In Acts 2:16-21 Peter says: ‘*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*’, (Acts 2:16). This was at least a partial fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy because the ‘*wonders in the heaven...and in the earth*’, (Acts 2:19,20 cf. Joel 2:30), did not occur then, and have not occurred since! Therefore most commentators believe we are still to see the complete fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy.

The New Testament shows God spoke to his people through Jesus Christ, (Heb.1:2) and then subsequently the Apostles and prophets, (Eph.4:11,12). The Apostles acknowledged each others writings (2Pet.3:15,16; 1Tim.6:18 cp Lk.10:7), and the Holy Spirit attests their authenticity, (1Cor.2:11,12). God entrusted this Word to the Jews as a race, (Rom.3:1,2).

In the Scriptures God has revealed all that is sufficient for life and godliness, (Deut.29:29; 2Pet.1:3). God has severely warned not to add to His Word at any time, (Deut.4:2; 12:32; Prov.30:6; Rev.22:18,19).

The modern use of 'God told me' has brought much false prophecy, error and a departure from 'Sola Scriptura'. 'God told me' may be acceptable if it is followed by chapter and verse from the Bible. To go beyond this might well be heresy. The doctrine of 'God told me' should *sometimes* be answered with 'No, He has not'.

We must not go beyond the Word (1Cor.4:6) or seek such signs, (Matt.12:39). God has not promised these for today. Most dreams may well be mere soulish outlets worked out during sleep. Little is known about the science of this. Soulish dreams are simply unreliable when filtered through the spiritual realm. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds through the Word of God, (Rom.12:1,2). It is in the Scriptures we see more and more of the nature and character of Christ and so be changed from glory to glory.

One author sums up the case well: *'...And why not both? Why not the illumination of Scripture coupled with new revelations of the Spirit? Simply because if you declare a need for both, you have implied the insufficiency of one. You have placed yourself back in the frame work of the Old Covenant, in a time when new revelations were required because of the incompleteness of the old. But Christ is the final Word. No further word for the redemption of men in the present age is needed. In Scripture is found all the truth that is needed for life and godliness...The reformers who paid with their life blood for freedom from dominance by the traditions of the church were especially jealous in guarding future generations from the oppressions created by supposed words from the lord. 'Scripture Alone' was their uncompromising cry. Only the written Word of God, an objective standard which all men can see and read, communicates infallible truth to God's people, since God now has stopped using His former methods of revealing His will to the church, (Heb.1:1). But the search goes on for a new way for God to continue revealing His will in ways other than through Holy Scripture. Each new generation offers a slightly different twist on the recurring theme.'* *

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* *'The Final Word'* by O. Palmer Robertson, P.135 & P.86