
Chapter 8.3

The Methods of Apostolic Revelation

Seeing & Hearing God

Table of Topics

A) Apostolic Revelation vs. "Inspiration"

B) The "Seeing" & "Hearing" of Jesus

B.1) Christ's claims to divine revelation

B.2) How Christ received revelation

B.3) When Christ received His revelation

C) The "Seeing" & "Hearing" of the Apostles

C.1) Claims & promises of apostolic revelation

C.2) Apostolic revelation by direct physical contact

C.3) Apostolic revelation by supernatural reminding

C.4) Apostolic revelation by visions/apparitions

C.5) Apostolic revelation by auditions

C.6) Apostolic revelation through Prophets

C.7) Apostolic preaching through Church tradition

Extras & Endnotes

Primary Points

- While the gifts of divine knowledge and wisdom refer to the deposit of divine revelation from which the Apostles wrote from, here we discuss the methods by which they received that divine knowledge.
- While common notions of apostolic “inspiration” suggest some sort of continuous, spontaneous divine/human telepathy, the Scriptures describe such revelation in more physical and abiding ways.
- Jesus spoke repeatedly of receiving divine revelation by what He physically “saw” and “heard,” just like OT Prophets, and especially Moses.
- We have several recorded instances of Jesus physically hearing the Father while He was on Earth.
- Promises of the Holy Spirit’s guidance and revelation were uniquely and exclusively given to the Apostles.
- It was during the more than three years they personally lived and worked with Christ that “**everything that [He] learned from [His] Father [He] made known to [the Twelve]**” (John 16:25).
- Jesus exclusively, “**appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God**” (Acts 1:3). No doubt there was a tremendous amount of revelation given during this time,
- The Apostles received the divine revelation they possessed and wrote from through a number of ways that are much more physical and objective than the common idea of a mystical, subjective “inspiration.”

A) Apostolic Revelation vs. "Inspiration"

While the gifts of divine knowledge and wisdom refer to the deposit of divine revelation from which the Apostles wrote from, how did they receive that revelation? Here we wish to note several methods of apostolic revelation and some of its characteristics. In the process, we hope to reevaluate the common notion of "inspiration."

We have noted elsewhere in *KOG* that there is a consensus in modern Christianity that apostolic revelation primarily came by "inspiration," which is commonly defined as a "divine influence" on the mind of the Apostle. One gets the impression from how such "inspiration" is described, that it operated much like some sort of *human/divine mental telepathy* by which thoughts of divine revelation were directly and continuously placed in the mind as one wrote Scripture. This is an aspect of what we call *mega mysticism* in which God provides extra-biblical divine revelation and commands through mental impressions and impulses.

On the contrary, we have already argued that the divine knowledge from which the Apostles wrote was more *abiding* in nature, such that they wrote from the knowledge they already possessed rather than being spontaneously "inspired." In addition, and as demonstrated elsewhere, neither the term, nor even the common concept of "inspiration" is used to describe the reception of apostolic revelation anywhere in Scripture.¹ Rather, as we will see, both Jesus and the Apostles describe their experience of divine revelation in rather physical, rather than mystical ways.

B) The "Seeing" & "Hearing" of Jesus

B.1) Christ's claims to divine revelation

As noted in the previous chapter, in speaking of how Jesus possessed the divine knowledge and wisdom He spoke with, we must always keep His unique deity in mind. Jesus' *nature* was divine, He was God, and uniquely had the Father living in Him (cf. John 10:30; 14:9-11).

Nonetheless, as we also wrote, "While we would fully maintain the deity of Christ, His humanness is revealed in the fact that He repeatedly claimed that His divine knowledge was received from the Father, and not inherent at birth (cf. John 7:16; 12:49; 14:10; 17:8)." ² While the boy Jesus was certainly enlightened (cf. Luke 2:46-7), we do not think Jesus was born with all the knowledge He

spoke. In fact, Luke states that as a young man, "**Jesus grew in wisdom**" (Luke 2:52). Therefore, we can accurately speak of Christ receiving and learning divine revelation while on the Earth.

Jesus obviously testified to being a messenger of divine revelation. He said:

"My teaching is not My own. It comes from Him Who sent Me. . . . My teaching comes from God" (John 7:16).

"I do nothing on My own but speak just what the Father has taught Me" (John 8:28).

"The Father Who sent Me commanded Me what to say and how to say it . . . So whatever I say is just what the Father has told Me to say" (John 12:49-50).

"The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather, it is the Father, living in Me, Who is doing His work" (John 14:10).

"Everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15).

[Praying to the Father] **"I gave them the words You gave Me"** (John 17:8).

The divine revelation that Jesus taught were things the Father had "**taught**" or "**gave**" Him, had "**commanded**" Him to say, and that Jesus had "**learned**" from the Father. At this point, we can suggest some answers to two questions: 1) *How* did Jesus receive the divine knowledge He had, and 2) *when* did He receive it.

B.2) How Christ received revelation

On the first question, and as also noted above, there is a prevalent conception in Christianity that Jesus was constantly in some sort of mystical communion with the Father such that thoughts were being transmitted telepathically to Jesus in a continual stream of information. On the contrary, Jesus spoke repeatedly of receiving divine revelation by what He physically "saw" and "heard," not just what He thought:

I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen (John 3:11).³

The One Who comes from Heaven is above all. He

testifies to what He has seen and heard" (John 3:31-2).

By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and My judgment is just (John 5:30).

He Who sent Me is reliable, and what I have heard from Him I tell the world". . . I do nothing on My own but speak just what the Father has taught Me [through what I heard] (John 8:26, 28).

I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence (John 8:38).

You are determined to kill Me, a man Who has told you the truth that I heard from God (John 8:40).

It seems clear that Christ is speaking literally about physically hearing and seeing revelation.⁴ There is no reason to interpret Him here as merely speaking metaphorically or mystically. Especially when we have ample biblical descriptions of His fellow Prophets seeing and hearing the revelation of God as well, either in visions or actual apparitions.⁵

It is interesting to note that all of these rather physical descriptions of how Jesus received revelation is given by the Apostle John who was especially focused on demonstrating the authenticity of Christ (cf. John 20:30-1). The contexts of these statements are often when Jesus is defending the authenticity and divinity of His revelations. How convincing would it be for Him to merely claim, "The Father is constantly giving Me mental impulses regarding the truth"? How much more helpful for Him to say He is actually seeing and hearing the Father.

Admittedly, the language is remarkable, and the present tenses used would again suggest to some a kind of continual mental telepathy between the Father and Son. But Jesus did not speak in terms of mere mental impulses, but again of what He saw and heard. Therefore, the safest conclusion is that He again is speaking of visions and/or apparitions. While the past tenses in some verses suggest visions He experienced in the past, other verses suggest Jesus may have continually experienced visions rather immediately before He did something or judged someone.

Jesus spoke what He had "**heard**" the Father say (John 8:26), and had "**seen in the Father's presence**" (8:38). Why then do so many conclude that all of this Father/Son communication was silent, mystical, mental telepathy? Why do most outright reject the suggestion that Christ physically saw and heard the Father with His

human eyes and ears as part of the process by which He received the divine revelation He spoke? It is because we live in a mystical age when such a notion is not spiritual enough for many, but that some sort of higher ESP is.

It is probable that Christ saw and heard the Father in revelatory visions like the Prophet Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, etc. The experience of a vision, for example, may best explain His statement: **"I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence"** (John 8:38). This seems to be describing an experience of being translated to the heavenly realm much like several biblical Prophets to receive revelation. Accordingly, Jesus no doubt saw and heard divine revelation in such visions.⁶

However, we would suggest Christ also habitually experienced His revelation in a more physical way with His human eyes and ears. We would suggest at least two reasons for this. First, we have several recorded instances of Jesus physically hearing the Father while He was on Earth, which in itself is a very unique experience. Accordingly, we have noted elsewhere:

At the time of Christ's baptism, **"a voice from Heaven said, 'This is My Son, Whom I love; with Him I am well pleased'"** (Matt 3:17). Likewise, at Christ's transfiguration, **"a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is My Son, Whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!'"** (Matt 17:5). And again, at Christ's request for the Father to glorify His Name, John records, **"Then a voice came from Heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.' The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to Him"** (John 12:28-29).⁷

Why couldn't the Father have spoken audibly to Christ at other times?

Our second line of evidence that the seeing and hearing through which Christ received revelation was of a physical kind is the ministry of Moses. Accordingly, we have written elsewhere:

God said:

When a Prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal Myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he [physically] sees the form of the LORD. (Num 12:6-8)

Of course, neither Moses nor any human has literally seen God's face (cf. Exod 33:20; John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tim 6:16; 1 John 4:12), although we are told Moses was granted an apparition of God's "**back**" (Exod 33:23). But God uses the metaphor to reflect how intimate Moses' experiences with God were. As we read elsewhere, "**The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend**" (Exod 33:9). The phrase also probably reflects the fact that while Moses only saw "**the form of the Lord,**" he physically heard the voice of the Lord as if God were facing Him.

Therefore, when we read almost 140 times "**The Lord said to Moses,**" we have good reason to believe these revelatory experiences were in the context of seeing "**the form of the Lord**" and speaking to Him as "**face to face,**" just as God Himself described (Num 12:8). Accordingly, we can conclude that essentially the whole Law of Moses, consisting of large portions of Exodus and Numbers, and virtually all of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, were received in this very same way. Not in visions, but in a very physical experience with God, either on Mount Sinai (cf. Exod 31:18; Lev 25:1; 27:34), or in the Tent of Meeting (cf. Exod 33:9; Num 1:1).⁸

In Numbers 12:6-8 God is making it clear that the physical revelations that Moses was accustomed to experiencing with his physical eyes and ears were superior to the merely mental visions He gave other Prophets. Why then would we relegate Christ to a means of divine revelation less than what Moses experienced as the communicator of the Old Covenant? In fact, God Himself parallels the revelatory ministry of Moses with Christ when He foretold, "**I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brothers**" (Deut 18:18).⁹ If God is equating Christ with Moses in some way, as most commentators believe, then this would seem to be some evidence that if Moses habitually experienced divine revelation in a physical way, then so did Christ.

Granted, we have no detailed descriptions in Scripture of Christ receiving revelations. What we do have is His repeated statement that His divine revelation came through what He "heard" and "saw" from the Father, either physically like Moses, or in visions like other Prophets. What we do not have is any indication in Scripture of the *mega mystical* idea of a constant telepathic communion between the Father and Son.

B.3) When Christ received His revelation

Regardless of whether Christ's seeing and hearing revelation was the physical or visionary kind, when would we suggest these revelatory episodes occurred? The most likely time was during the many occasions that Christ intentionally went to solitary places alone. Luke records, "**Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed** (5:16), and at least on one occasion this was for a whole "**night**" (6:12; cf. Matt 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:46). During these times of intercession with the Father, Jesus no doubt was spoken to by the Father.

In other words, why would we assume that what Jesus experienced with others at His "transfiguration" was unique? We read that, "**there [physically] appeared . . . Moses and Elijah, [audibly] talking with Jesus,**" and that the Father Himself spoke audibly (cf. Matt 17:3-5). Perhaps the only thing unique about this incident in Christ's life is that His three closest disciples were invited to personally witness it. Otherwise, there is no reason to believe that Christ did not receive much of the divine revelation He possessed in this same rather physical manner while He was on Earth.

Such visions could have occurred at the times of solitude noted above. One especially thinks of the 40 days of fasting in the desert that occurred at the very beginning of His ministry (cf. Matt 4:1-11). While obviously no such experience is recorded, such supernatural phenomena as interacting with the devil and being attended to by Angels suggests He sure could have interacted with His Father as well. Moses, of whom the prophetic ministry of Christ was to be patterned after (cf. Deut 18:18), received much of his physical revelation when he was, "**with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water**" (Exod 34:28).

C) The "Seeing" & "Hearing" of the Apostles

C.1) Claims & promises of apostolic revelation

Christ claimed that His Apostles uniquely possessed divine revelation when He said "**The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven has been given to you, but not to them [other people following Jesus]**" (Matt 13:11). We believe, and support elsewhere, that the following claims and promises of Christ exclusively applied to the Apostles as well ¹⁰:

All this I have spoken while still with you. But the . . . the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:25-26)

I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you (John 15:15).

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears and He will tell you what is yet to come. (John 16:12-13)

Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about My Father. (John 16:25)

We do not believe anyone else apart from Christ's Apostles can claim these descriptions and promises for themselves. It is only through the writings of the Apostles that we can now have the revelation Christ speaks of above. The Apostles alone had direct revelation of "**everything**" Jesus had "**learned from** [the] **Father,**" (5:15) of "**all truth**" pertaining to the New Covenant, including "**what is yet to come,**" (16:12-13) and revelation about God the Father. It was this unique gift and possession of divine wisdom and knowledge that gave them their unique apostolic authority in the Church and equipped them to write divinely authoritative documents for the Church. And it was these statements of Christ that were His promises of this very unique revelation. If, in fact, these promises are intended to be claimed by all Christians for themselves, we then have no biblical promises of any kind of unique, authoritative revelation on the part of the Apostles.

But these promises were uniquely to the Apostles. Accordingly, they claimed a unique possession of divine revelation and a unique authority to write it. The Apostle Peter wrote at the end of his epistle, "**I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God**" (1 Pet 5:12 ESV). Likewise, the Apostle John claimed to have divine revelation concerning the source of eternal life when he introduced his epistle by writing:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The Life appeared;

we have seen It and testify to It, and we proclaim to you the Eternal Life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.
(1 John 1:1-3)

The Apostle Paul was personally commissioned as a messenger of new divine revelation by Christ Himself on the Damascus Road. Ananias confirmed the incident when he told Paul: **"The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from His mouth"** (Acts 22:14). The Apostle was to later recount that Christ said to Him:

"I am Jesus . . . I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of Me and what I will show you.' . . . I am sending you to [Gentiles] to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:15-18)

Of course, for the Apostle to carry out this commission, he needed a revelation of the new saving Gospel which Paul claimed when he wrote:

I want you to know, brothers, that the Gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. (Gal 1:11-12)

However, it was not only a revelation of the Gospel that Paul claimed, but he claimed divine revelation for all of the doctrine and commands he wrote in Scripture. Thus, he wrote the Ephesians: **"Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace [gift of divine wisdom and knowledge] that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly [e.g. Eph chs. 1-2]"** (Eph 3:2-3).

Concerning the sacrament of the Lord's Supper Paul wrote: **"I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread . . ."** (1 Cor 11:23). Paul did not receive his knowledge of what occurred on that night from one of the disciples, but rather, Jesus Himself described to Paul what had happened and the significance of it.

It was because Paul was uniquely **"called to be an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,"** (1 Cor 1:1) that he possessed

direct divine revelation that included his **"testimony about Christ"** (1 Cor 1:6), and **"a message of . . . God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden"** (1 Cor 2:6-7). He could claim that God had **"revealed"** to him **"by His Spirit"** what **"no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived"** which is **"what God has prepared for those who love Him"** (1 Cor 2:9-10) and that he could, **"speak not in words taught . . . by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words"** (1 Cor 2:12).¹¹ Accordingly, he declared, **"I do have knowledge"** of new divine revelation from Christ that proves I am one of His few Apostles (2 Cor 11:6).

Contrary to much popular opinion,¹² then, the Apostle Paul demonstrated his own belief that he was writing divine Scripture when he tells the Corinthians, **"what I am writing to you is the Lord's command"** (1 Cor 14:37). The issue Paul was writing about here concerned the proper regulation of the gifts of tongues and prophecy in the Christian assembly. We have no other record of Christ giving these commands, and the Apostle no doubt received them by divine revelation from Christ, and then wrote accordingly.

C.2) Apostolic revelation by direct physical contact

How then did the Apostles receive the divine revelation they possessed and wrote from? There are a number of ways described in Scripture. First, the Twelve Apostles were physically present for, and physically heard and saw the vast majority of the teachings and actions of Jesus. Perhaps the only exceptions were His time of temptation in the desert (cf. Matt 4:4ff) and His conversation with the Samaritan woman (cf. John 4:4ff).¹³

It was for the purpose of giving divine revelation that Christ **"appointed twelve—designating them Apostles—that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach"** (Mark 3:14) the revelation they were given. It was during the more than three years they personally lived and worked with Christ that **"everything that [He] learned from [His] Father [He] made known to [the Twelve]"** (John 16:25). Likewise, Christ noted during His rather lengthy Upper Room Discourse, **"All this I have spoken while still with you"** (John 14:25-26).

Accordingly, the Apostle John claimed that the divine revelation the Apostles spoke and wrote was what, **"we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life"** (1 John 1:1). An example of this is when John records of himself:

One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. (John 19:34-35)

John's knowledge of the real death of Christ was not "inspiration" but observation. He had physically witnessed it with his own eyes. There is nothing here that is normally understood as "inspiration" or a mere "influence of the Spirit," or divine/human telepathy. Rather, John is very intentional in describing the apostolic revelation in the most objective, physical, sensual terms possible. No doubt he did this in opposition to the Gnostics who were misleading those he was writing to, and who claimed mystical and subjective divine revelations.¹⁴ John was making the point that the Apostles of Jesus Christ, unlike the Gnostics, received their revelation of Christ in very physical, objective terms.

The Apostles experience of revelation by direct physical contact with Christ is illustrated when Christ told the Twelve: "**The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven has been given to you**" (Matt 13:11). Out of context, this could be used by modern Gnostics and *mega mystics* as a proof text to suggest the disciples were mystically "inspired" with "**the knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven.**" However, Christ goes on to tell them:

Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many Prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. Listen [physically] then to what the parable of the sower means. (vs. 16-18)

How then did the disciples receive "**The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven?**" Through all the experiences they saw with their "**eyes**" and the teaching heard with their "**ears,**" including listening to Christ's personal explanation of this parable.

Likewise, when Peter confessed that Jesus is, "**the Christ, the Son of the living God,**" "**Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by My Father in Heaven"** (Matt 16:16-17). How was it revealed? No doubt through all the things that Peter had seen with his eyes and heard with his ears including the changing of water into wine (cf. John 2:1-11), a "**furious storm**" being commanded to cease (cf. Matt 8:23-27), and a dead girl being raised to life (Matt 9:18-26). This is how the "**Father in Heaven**" had revealed

Christ's identity to Peter, not through some mystical divine telepathy.

Because of the physical, personal nature of the apostolic revelation, Peter spoke as follows about the man who would replace Judas as a messenger of Christ's revelation:

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection. (Acts 1:21-22)

Accordingly, the vast majority of what Matthew and John wrote in their Gospels did not come from visions or some sort of "inspiration," but rather from their personal physical experiences with Christ. They were *there* when Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt 5-7), and *only* they were there when He taught the Olivet Discourse (cf. Matt 24-25) and the Upper Room Discourse (cf. John 13-17).

Not only did such men spend over three years with Jesus learning what they would later teach and write, but after His resurrection, Jesus exclusively, "**appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God**" (Acts 1:3).

¹⁵ No doubt there was a tremendous amount of revelation given during this time, which Christ was probably specifically referring to when He said, "**Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about My Father**" (John 16:25). We would suggest it was also during those 40 days that He at least partially fulfilled the following promise:

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears and He will tell you what is yet to come. (John 16:12-13)

When we read that the subject during those 40 days was "**the kingdom of God**" it no doubt includes the future kingdom of God. The death of Christ had brought about many questions concerning the promises of such a kingdom, prompting even the question recorded here when Luke writes: "**So when they met together [during the 40 days], they asked Him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'**" (Acts 1:6). Surely His teachings included further information on His second coming.

Regardless, we have above a variety of events that provided significant apostolic revelation by direct physical contact with Christ, as opposed to some "inspiration."

C.3) Apostolic revelation by supernatural reminding

Certainly, immediately after the post-resurrection teachings Christ gave the Eleven, they began to teach what they had learned. While they perhaps waited several years to write it, they began to teach it immediately. While the fact that their personal presence with Christ had no doubt rather burned His teachings on their heart, Christ gave an additional promise that would ensure their ability to accurately and faithfully pass on His teachings. On the night before He died He told the Twelve:

All this I have spoken while still with you. But the . . . Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will [supernaturally] remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:25-26)

Several things can be said about this rather remarkable promise. First, while the memories and rather immediate and constant recitation of what Christ taught would seem to have been sufficient for the faithful transmission of Christ's teachings, He promised an additional assurance that they would be supernaturally reminded of "**everything**" He had said to them. Accordingly, we read, "**After He was raised from the dead, His disciples recalled what He had said** [about the temple]. **Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken**" (John 2:18-22; cf. Luke 24:8).

Secondly, this is perhaps the foundational promise for the accuracy and authenticity of particularly the writings of Matthew and John to whom this promise was made.

Thirdly, in light of all the personal experience the Apostles had with Christ, and this promise of a supernatural reminding, we do not need the many natural explanations or disclaimers for the Gospels of Matthew and John, including the suggestion that Jews had good memories, that these Gospels are only summaries of what Jesus said, or that Matthew and John took notes which they later used.¹⁶ There may be some truth to all of these, but they are not important in light of Christ's promise of a subsequent revelation of the Spirit to remind them exactly what He said.

Fourthly, as we argue elsewhere, this promise would seem to only apply to the Eleven.¹⁷ It is not a promise to those of us who now possess the written record of the Apostles, that we will

supernaturally remember **"everything"** Christ said. Nor is it a promise the we will somehow supernaturally remember what Christ said. This is no shortcut for memorizing the word of God.

Finally, it is possible that this "reminding" occurred in the same more physical and objective ways that much of divine revelation was received by Apostles and Prophets such as miraculous visions, auditions, and apparitions.¹⁸ This would surely help them know with certainty that they were remembering the words of Jesus rather than **"the delusions of their own minds"** (Jer 14:14). Imagine mere thoughts going through your mind regarding a conversation or teaching that occurred decades ago. Wouldn't you be doubtful that you were really remembering it word for word? Accordingly, when Jesus promised, **"the . . . Holy Spirit . . . will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you"** (John 14:26), we do not believe this would occur through some sort of *divine/human mental telepathy*. Notice that the promise is *not* that the Eleven would be enabled to *remember* within their own minds, but that they would receive a *revelation*, a reminder from the Holy Spirit.

Such as revelation of reminder would have been especially applicable to the Apostle John who wrote long passages of Christ's discourses more than sixty years after Christ spoke them. Perhaps this is why we find this remarkable promise of the Spirit's revelation of reminding only in John's Gospel.

At this point, we can ask, do we have descriptions of Christ and the Holy Spirit giving revelation to John? The *Revelation of Jesus Christ* provides that. And did this revelation come in some sort of *divine/human mental telepathy* of mere thoughts? No. So why would we ignore the probability that the *reminding* of Christ came in the same manner as the *revelation* of Jesus Christ? Especially when we note the good possibility that both the Revelation and the Gospel were written near the end of the Apostle's life in the late 90's. All of this is why we believe the supernatural reminder Christ promised the Eleven was another revelation of the Spirit, and came in a more objective and recognizable way than the common notion of "inspiration."

Accordingly, the promise in John 14:25-26 is not a proof text for the claims of *mega mysticism* in which God is supposedly providing direct guidance on extrabiblical issues through some sort of *divine/human mental telepathy*. The promise was specifically to eleven men in order to enable them to write Scripture.

C.4) Apostolic revelation by visions/apparitions

While much of the revelation written in the Gospels and the epistles of Peter and John probably originated in their personal, physical experiences with Christ before and after His resurrection, this would obviously not be the case with the Apostle Paul. As we have noted, even his first encounter with Christ was in a vision (cf. Acts 9:3-7).

A key text in understanding how Paul received the divine revelation he preached and wrote is Ananias' statement to him at his conversion experience:

"The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from His mouth. You will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard." (Acts 22:14-15).

Why would we assume that Paul's experience of seeing and hearing Jesus was only to occur at his conversion? Subsequently, we read of other divine visitations the Apostle Paul experienced. In some cases, we cannot be sure if they were experienced physically as an apparition, or mentally as a vision,¹⁹ and even Paul confessed to not always being able to tell the difference either (cf. 2 Cor 12:1-4).

In Jerusalem, in the context of being attacked by an angry mob, Paul told them:

When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance [ekstasei] and saw the Lord speaking. 'Quick!' He said to me. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.' (Acts 22:17-18)

Luke records that later, **"The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, 'Take courage! As you have testified about Me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome'"** (Acts 23:11).

Again, it is not clear if Jesus appeared to Paul here in a physical way much like He did with the other Apostles after His resurrection, or whether this was a vision. Nonetheless, Jesus personally visited Paul, granting him an encouraging and supernatural prediction of his future.

At another time, **"Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'"** (Acts 16:9), after which he immediately left Troas. Of his initial visit to Corinth we read:

One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God (Acts 18:9-11) (Acts 23:11).

Of course, a significant divine vision experienced by the Apostle was described to the Corinthians when he wrote:

I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— ⁴ was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. (2 Cor 12:1-4)

Finally, while in the midst of a storm at sea, Paul was also visited by “**an Angel of . . . God**” who “**said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you’**” (Acts 27:23-4).

It would seem that revelatory visions were an important part of the Apostle Paul’s life and ministry. Therefore, when the Apostle speaks of receiving something by revelation, it would seem best to infer that it occurred through a vision. Accordingly, when Paul writes, “**I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you**” (1 Cor 11:23) about the Lord’s Supper, we would conclude this revelation was received in a personal appearance of the Lord.

Likewise, when the Apostle claims:

I want you to know brothers, that the Gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation [apokalypseōs] from Jesus Christ (Gal 1:11-12).

This would have been a perfect opportunity to use the term “inspiration,” but Paul uses “**revelation**,” to describe how he received his knowledge of the Gospel “**from Jesus Christ.**” And it would seem to us that the reason Paul describes His “**revelation**” of the Gospel as coming from Christ, is because Christ personally appeared to Him to give Paul this knowledge. ²⁰ The same can be said of the Apostles statement that, “**the mystery** [i.e. New Covenant doctrines taught in Eph chs. 1-2, was] **made known to**

me by revelation, as I have already written briefly” (Eph 3:2-3).

There simply is no biblical reason for why *all* of Paul’s revelatory encounters with Christ, to receive the divine wisdom and knowledge by which he wrote Scripture, did not occur in such objective, physical ways. We have no reason to believe that the Apostle Paul ever received his divine knowledge merely through some mystical, subjective manner in which “inspired” thoughts merely entered his consciousness, bypassing his physical senses. On the contrary, we would suggest that Paul initially received his knowledge through physical means, then spoke and wrote through the *abiding knowledge* he possessed. The common idea that he was spontaneously “inspired” through some kind of mental telepathy while he wrote or spoke divine revelation is unnecessary, and is nowhere explicitly described in Scripture.²¹

It is because there are no descriptions of a subjective, mystical, telepathic “inspiration” in Scripture, nor is the term even used, that we conclude that all references to divine revelation in Scripture are of the objective, physical kind that is received through human senses of sight and hearing. Accordingly, we have written elsewhere:

We suggest that the objective nature of divine revelation in Scripture has several important ramifications in contemporary theology. First, it makes the volumes of debate on different theories of divine “inspiration” rather obsolete. In other words, the great deal of discussion that has occurred in order to describe how the Holy Spirit merely “influenced” the minds of Apostles and Prophets is unnecessary because that is not how God granted them their revelation anyway.

Secondly, the objective view of divine revelation makes that which we possess in Scripture more trustworthy. Even the non-Prophetic or non-apostolic historians who have writings included in Scripture derived their information from the objective means of observation, research, and testimony. We know that the biblical writers did not write simply the subjective thoughts that mystically came into their mind, but that there is a real, physical, and historical basis for what they wrote.

Thirdly, it is rather ironic that *mega mystics*²² popularly claim to be divinely guided by mere thoughts, impressions, and intuitions, when in fact Prophets and Apostles never claimed to be spoken to by God in this manner. Accordingly, as we demonstrate elsewhere, there is no biblical basis for the potentially hazardous doctrines of *mega mysticism*, because there are no biblical examples of God ever communicating to

anyone in the way they claim God is telepathically communicating to them.²³

Of course, the Apostle Paul was not the only Apostle to receive divine revelation through visions. All of Revelation is a vision experienced by the Apostle John. Likewise, we read of the following concerning Peter:

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.

¹¹ He saw Heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to Earth by its four corners. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the Earth and birds of the air. ¹³

Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to Heaven. (Acts 10:1-16)

This was a monumental revelation to Peter as he understood from it that **"God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right"** (Acts 10:34-5). This vision was the beginning of the Church understanding the critical and revolutionary truth that, **"God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life"** (Acts 11:18). Accordingly, the vision was supernaturally authenticated in several ways, including its repetition three times, a corroborating vision by the Gentile Cornelius, and a subsequent supernatural conversion of Cornelius' Gentile household authenticated by the gift of tongues. Therefore, we see that even for those Apostles who spent personal time with Jesus, there was to be more revelation given through subsequent visions.

Revelatory visions such as these, like the many experienced by OT Prophets before them, would seem to be another explanation of how Christ fulfilled the following promise to the Apostles:

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears and He will tell you what is yet to come. (John 16:12-13)

Perhaps one of the truths the Apostles would not be able to “bear” before Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, and the reception of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, was the revolutionary expansion of God’s saving grace beyond the Jews. And of course, it was a vision through which the Apostle John was told by the Spirit, “**what is yet to come.**” Accordingly, we would claim that the revelation that Christ promised after His ascension, in which the “**Spirit**” would “**guide**” them “**into all truth**” and “**speak**” to them “**what is yet to come,**” would consist of revelatory visions. We do not believe there is biblical evidence that this was a promise of some sort of telepathic “inspiration” consisting of merely thoughts entering the mind.

C.5) Apostolic revelation by auditions

More specifically, John says that when the Spirit reveals these things to the Apostles that He “**will speak**” (16:13). The Greek word here, *lalēsei*, means “to make a sound, utter words.”²⁴ Accordingly, it would seem that the Spirit’s revelation would come by something the Apostles would hear with their ears. Certainly to say the Spirit would “**speak**” to them meant more than just putting thoughts in their head.

Accordingly, we have biblical evidence that the Apostles heard the voice of God. After Peter had experienced the important vision described above, we read: “**While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them”** (Acts 10:19). It is possibly the revelation of the Spirit occurred as part of the vision, but it seems it occurred afterward in a physical way heard with his ears.

Likewise, the Apostle Paul reports as part of his initial encounter with Christ: “**I saw a light from Heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?’**” (Acts 22:6-7).

While it may be difficult to dogmatically prove, we would suggest that both of these instances of hearing the Spirit or Jesus occurred in a physical way, as perhaps in Peter’s case, or in a vision as clearly in Paul’s case. It is, of course, instances like this in which biblical characters heard God’s voice that *mega mystics* wish to use to support their claim that the Spirit regularly “speaks” to them through mental impulses. We simply don’t believe these examples

support such a notion as God was either heard physically with the person's ears, or psychically in a vision.²⁵

C.6) Apostolic revelation through Christian Prophets

There were times that Apostles received revelation through Prophets. We read of the clearest example as follows:

After we had been there a number of days, a Prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" (Acts 21:10-11)

Here, the Holy Spirit communicated extra-biblical revelation to Paul and did it through a NT Christian Prophet.

We believe the same thing occurred in the following event where we are told NT Prophets were present:

In the church at Antioch there were Prophets and Teachers . . . As they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said [through one of the Prophets], "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3)

The clearest understanding of the source of this direct quote of the Holy Spirit's command is that it came from one or more of the NT Prophets present there.²⁶ In the passage above, the "**Prophets**" present had, no doubt, already been miraculously authenticated as Prophets and their words were quickly and unquestionably obeyed as the direct words of the Holy Spirit.²⁷ Accordingly, those who heard it immediately obeyed this extra-biblical revelation, accepting it as God's specific will for Saul and Barnabas, regardless of the hardships and dangers they were sending them into.

We would also suggest the following revelation to Paul came through a prophetic ministry as well. He writes:

Compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. (Acts 20:22)

Note that Paul says these divine warnings came when he visited “**every city**” on his way to Jerusalem. More specifically, he was no doubt visiting a church in each of those cities, and characteristic of the time, the local churches had Prophets. What Paul is describing here probably occurred in much the way he experienced the Prophet Agabus’ warning, which was also during the same trip.

Likewise, the Apostle wrote: “**The Spirit clearly says** [*legei*: to express oneself orally or in written form, *utter in words, say, tell, give expression to* ²⁸] **that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons**” (1 Tim 4:1; cf. 1 Tim 1:7; 2 Tim 2:7). Once again, the use of *legei* here excludes the idea of some sort of direct mental telepathy. The Spirit *uttered* something audible. However, it is most likely that this is another instance of the Spirit giving this prediction through a Christian Prophet. ²⁹ While there is little NT Scripture from NT Prophets (Jude may be an example), here is at least a probable instance of a prophetic revelation recorded in apostolic writing.

We would offer a similar explanation for the following event as well:

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. (Acts 16:6-7)

We would suggest that at least one of Paul’s “**companions**” was a Prophet as well, and through him, the Holy Spirit provided this specific direction. In fact, we know that Silas was both accompanying Paul at this point in his journey (cf. Acts 15:40) and he was known as a Christian Prophet (cf. Acts 15:32). If this explanation is unconvincing, we note that Paul has a vision immediately after this incident instructing him to go to Macedonia. No doubt the Spirit could have provided such warnings in the same way.

The same explanation is best for Acts 15:28 where we read that after the “Jerusalem Council” the Apostles wrote the churches: “**It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements.**” How did the Apostles and Elders present know that their decision “**seemed good to the Holy Spirit**”? Because there were Christian Prophets present who were able to receive direct divine Scripture-quality revelation from God. The Council sent “**Judas and Silas**” (v. 22) to deliver the letter to “**the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria**

and Cilicia" (v. 23). These two men were no doubt present at the Council and are specifically and intentionally described by Luke as follows: "**Judas and Silas . . . were Prophets**" (v. 32). And considering the pivotal and new nature of the doctrine coming from the "Jerusalem Council" it is understandable that God would authenticate it with the authority of authenticated Prophets. Some sort of feeling or mere thought that these divine directions "**seemed good to the Holy Spirit**" might be sufficient for modern *mega mystics* but not for first century Christians.

Nevertheless, such biblical data gives no support to the *mega mystical* claim that God normally guides us through mental impressions. Paul never was.³⁰

C.7) Apostolic preaching through Church tradition

It is readily recognized that men who were not Apostles like Luke wrote Scripture based on eye witness testimony, personal interviews, historical research, and an understanding of early Church tradition. At times, the Apostle Paul wrote from similar sources. For example, he writes the Corinthians:

For what I received [as testimony from the other Apostles] I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.⁶ After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the Apostles,⁸ and last of all He appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (1 Cor 15:3-7)

While at 1 Corinthians 11:23 he had said he "**received from the Lord what I also passed on to you**" concerning the Lord's supper, here the Apostle does not specify that he received information about the death, burial, resurrection, and appearances of Christ from the Lord. Rather, it is more likely that the core beliefs about Christ came from his interaction with other Apostles during his three or four visits to Jerusalem after his conversion but before writing 1 Corinthians.³¹ Especially the testimonies concerning Christ's post-resurrection appearances to "**Peter . . . the Twelve . . . five hundred brothers . . . James . . . all the Apostles**" would seem more likely to have come from the Apostles

themselves instead of a personal revelation from Christ to Paul. Accordingly, Leon Morris writes concerning this passage:

Paul did not originate the message he gave them. He simply passed on what he had received. This is the accepted language for the handing on of tradition. What follows is a very early summary of the church's traditional teaching Paul is not giving us some views has worked out for itself his passing on what had been told him.³²

Extras & Endnotes

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) How is the "inspiration" of the Apostles usually described?
- 2) How does this idea of "inspiration" reflect what we call *mega mysticism*?
- 3) How does the Bible's description of how Jesus and the Apostles received revelation differ from the common idea of "inspiration"?
- 4) What are examples of the more physical ways that Christ received revelation?
- 5) We claim that promises concerning the revelatory work of the Holy Spirit exclusively apply to the Apostles. Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 6) What special occasions do we claim Christ used to reveal revelation to the Apostles through simply speaking to them as a person?
- 7) What are examples of the more physical ways that Christ received revelation?

Publications & Particulars

¹ The common idea of "inspiration" and the popular view of divine guidance we refer to as *mega msysticism* all depend on what we call *divine/human mental telepathy* and faulty ideas about "inspiration." Concerning the

first issue see chapter 7.16, and for the latter, see chapters 8.8-8.11

² See further discussion of the relationship between Christ's deity and His revelation at section 8.1.B.

³ Christ's reference to "**what we have seen**" has produced some debate. Who is Jesus referring to in addition to Himself? Calvin wrote: "For my own part, I have no doubt that Christ mentions himself in connection with all the prophets of God, and speaks generally in the person of all." (*Commentaries*; online at www.ccel.org). If Christ is speaking of the revelation of new divine doctrine, then this is the only acceptable answer for us. Both Jesus and the Prophets spoke from what they had seen in visions. This seems to be the best interpretation.

In our opinion, D. A. Carson successfully debunks two common interpretations, but his own is inadequate:

Jesus speaks in the plural: *we speak ... we know ... we testify ... we have seen*. As in v. 7, the 'you' also becomes plural: hence NIV'S *you people*. A few commentators therefore conclude that the historical Jesus thereby identifies himself with his disciples [cf. Morris, 196; Ridderbos, 134, Barnes]. This is unlikely: at this point in their pilgrimage the disciples could not be described as speaking of what they know and testifying to what they have seen, *viz.* heavenly things (v. 12).

The majority of interpreters detect frank anachronism: v. 11 does not report what Jesus said to Nicodemus, but what the church of John's day said to the synagogue. Bruce (pp. 86-87) makes a virtue of this perceived necessity: the Evangelist does not care whether he relates the witness of Jesus, or the witness of the later church to Jesus, since at bottom the witness is all one and the same. But although it may be 'the same' in the sense that all of it ultimately relates to the same divine self-disclosure in Jesus Christ, the sameness stops there. John is persistently careful to distinguish between what the disciples understood during Jesus' ministry and what they understood only later (*cf.* notes on 2:22, and Carson, 'Mis').

The simplest explanation for the plurals in this verse is that Jesus is sardonically aping the plural that Nicodemus affected when he first approached Jesus (v. 2). 'Rabbi', Nicodemus said, 'we know you are a teacher who has come from God 'I tell you the truth', responds Jesus, 'we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen' - as if to say, 'We know one or two things too, we do!' (*The Gospel According to John* [Eerdmans, 1991], 198-99).

Again, because the revelation that Jesus is speaking of is "**heavenly things**" (v. 12), it seems best to understand Him as grouping Himself with others who testified to direct divine revelation, most immediately referring to the Prophet John the Baptist.

⁴ NT scholar Herman Ridderbos (1909-2007) commented on John 3:11 and 5:30:

Intended above all is the Son's unmediated knowledge of the Father (cf. 1:18), which in vss. 31-36 is defined as knowledge on the part of him who "comes from above" and who "bears witness to what he has seen and heard" (vss. 31, 32f.; cf. 7:28 f.). Elsewhere, too, Jesus bases his knowledge of God on what he has "seen" and "heard" (e.g. 5:19, 20, 30; 8:26, 28, 40, 50; 12:50), and that in contrast with those who have never heard his voice or seen him (5:37; cf. 6:46). . . . The Fourth Gospel repeatedly traces Jesus' speech and action to what he "saw" and "heard." Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1997), 133, 192.

Unfortunately, Dr. Ridderbos has been about the only commentator who even recognized the physical meaning of Christ's language, let alone its significance. However, even he claimed that the "seeing" Christ refers to in John 3:11 cannot be "referring to visions, which certainly does not fit Jesus" (133). Why not? He was a Prophet from God. And Dr. Ridderbos, to our knowledge, while recognizing that Jesus described His revelations as "seeing" and "hearing" never describes more specifically what Jesus meant by that.

Calvin has little comment on Jesus' description of his revelations. Barnes rather pathetically comments on 3:11:

Jesus had seen by his omniscient eye all the operations of the Spirit on the hearts of men. His ministers have seen its effects as we see the effects of the wind, and, having seen men changed from sin to holiness, they are qualified to bear witness to the truth and reality of the change. (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*; online at www.ccel.org)

The "seeing" and "hearing" language Jesus uses to describe the means of his revelation meant a lot more than Him merely witnessing changes in people's lives. Dr. Barnes had little comment on the other verses in John referring to this phenomena.

Leon Morris and D. A. Carson are equally uninterested in Jesus' descriptions of His revelations. The closest they come to any description is at 3:31 where Dr. Carson writes: "only the Son of Man can speak with supreme authority of heavenly things, for he alone *testifies to what he has seen and heard* in the heavenly sphere" (213). Dr. Morris uses identical language (*The Gospel According to John (NICNT)* [Eerdmans, 1995], 216). However, neither elaborates on what they mean by "heavenly sphere."

At times, Dr. Morris seems to especially miss the more objective/physical nature of Christ's revelatory experiences and gives an unbiblical mystical twist to them when he writes on John 5:19: "There is a continual contemplation of the Father by the Son, an uninterrupted communion" (277). Likewise on 5:30 he writes: "the language is metaphorical and points to the Son's complete dependence on the Father . . . He is always in touch with the Father" (286).

⁵ For examples of physical revelation to the Prophets in the OT see section 9.5.A and chapters 10.10-10.11.

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- ⁶ For further discussion of the recorded instances when Christ physically heard the Father while on Earth see section 10.10.A.
- ⁷ Excerpt from section 10.10.A.
- ⁸ Excerpt from section 10.10.B.
- ⁹ Dr. Barnes wrote regarding Deuteronomy 18:18:
 The ancient fathers of the Church and the generality of modern commentators have regarded our Lord as the prophet promised in these verses. It is evident from the New Testament alone that the Messianic was the accredited interpretation among the Jews at the beginning of the Christian era (compare the marginal references, and John 4:25); nor can our Lord Himself, when He declares that Moses "wrote of Him" John 5:45-47, be supposed to have any other words more directly in view than these, the only words in which Moses, speaking in his own person, gives any prediction of the kind. (*Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*, Electronic Step Files [Findex.com])
- C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch remarkably have no comment on the relationship between Moses and Christ at Deuteronomy 18:18 (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM [Findex.com, 2000]).
- ¹⁰ For arguments that promises of divine revelation to the Apostles cannot be claimed by Christians today see chapter 14.13.
- ¹¹ For arguments that the claims to divine revelation made in 1 Corinthians 2 apply only to Apostles see section 14.13.E
- ¹² Some Christian scholars have disagreed that the Apostles knew they were writing divinely authoritative documents. Such views would seem to clearly contradict several statements of the Apostles themselves. For further discussion see section 8.4.A.
- ¹³ There is a question as to how present the Twelve were during Christ's interrogations and beatings prior to His crucifixion. At the beginning of Christ's arrest, we are told, "**Then all the disciples deserted Him and fled**" (Matt 26:56; cf. v. 31), suggesting none were present to personally witness what followed. However, Matthew immediately records, "**But Peter followed Him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome**" (Matt 26:58). John gives even more detail, writing:
Simon Peter and another disciple [John] were following Jesus. Because this disciple [John] was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard,¹⁶ but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple [John], who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in. (John 18:15-16).
- Clearly, then, both the Apostles Peter and John were present for Christ's first interrogation by the high priest Annas (cf. John 18:13, 19, 22, 24; Carson, 581-2). Consequently, there is no reason to believe they

were not present for the subsequent interrogations of Caiaphas and Pilate, accompanying the crowd of people that were following these events (cf. Matt 26:47; 27:17). Although at the point of the rooster crowing the third time, Peter is said to have **"went outside [the courtyard] and wept bitterly"** (Matt 26:75), it seems likely that afterward he continued to observe the rather public events that followed.

Evidence that John was present particularly for the interrogations is the fact that he evidently had some sort of privileged relationship with the high priest (cf. John 18:15). We are told emphatically that John was present at the crucifixion as he was **"standing nearby"** the cross when Christ was dying to accept Mary as his "mother" (cf. John 19:25-27), and upon reporting that Jesus was stabbed on the cross John wrote, **"The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe"** (John 19:35).

The most difficult dialogue to account for is that between Christ and Pilate. While much of what Pilate said was public for the disciples to personally hear, John reports, **"Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?'"** (John 18:33). It is unlikely that anyone else was present for the conversation that took place, except perhaps a Roman guard. How then do we know what Pilate and Jesus said? While most would suggest some sort of subsequent "inspiration" in which this dialogue was simply telepathically placed in the minds of those who recorded it, we would suggest that Jesus perhaps related the conversation to them after His resurrection during the forty days in which He **"spoke to them about the kingdom of God"** (Acts 1:3), which, by the way, was precisely the topic that Pilate and Jesus were discussing privately (cf. John 18:33-37).

A final point of clarification concerns the fact that John's version of these events adds additional information to what we find repeated in the other three Gospels. We would suggest this is because the version in the Synoptics originated from Peter (this is especially so of Mark), who personally witnessed the events. John, later being aware of the contents of these Gospels, added information from what he had witnessed.

¹⁴ For further on the Apostle John's battle with the Gnostics in his epistle see section 14.15.B.

¹⁵ While Luke records that this period of post-resurrection appearances of Christ occurred for 40 days, Irenaeus (c. 180) wrote:

But after his resurrection he tarried [on earth] eighteen months; and knowledge descending into him from above, he taught what was clear. He instructed a few of his disciples, whom he knew to be capable of understanding so great mysteries, in these things, and was then received up into heaven, (*Against Heresies*, I.30.14; online at www.ccel.org)

¹⁶ On apostolic note taking, NT scholar David Farnell writes:

In Jewish practice of the day, especially in rabbinic circles, disciples kept private notes of their rabbinical instruction . . . Gundry, a supporter of the Two-/Four Source Hypothesis, accepts short written

accounts stemming from apostolic origin: "[T]he Apostle Matthew was a note taker during the earthly ministry of Jesus.... [H]is notes provided the basis for the bulk of the apostolic gospel tradition.... Shorthand was used possibly as early as the fourth century B. C. and certainly by Jesus time"

The combination of exacting oral tradition and short written accounts helped not only to ensure the accuracy of the Gospels' records of events and sayings but also to provide a reasonable explanation of why the synoptics have extensive agreement among themselves. (*Three Views on the Origins of the Synoptic Gospels*, Robert Thomas, ed. [Kregel, 2002], 283)

None of this is needed if Christ's promise of supernatural remembrance is taken seriously. Likewise, Norm Geisler writes:

There are many long discourses of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, including the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), the parables (e.g., Matt. 13), the denunciation of the Jewish leaders (Matt. 23), the Mount Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25), the Upper Room Discourse (John 14-17), and the high-priestly prayer (John 17). It is alleged to be very unlikely that these could have been remembered word-for-word a generation or more later, when they were recorded.

In response, the critics overlook some important facts.

First, their dates for the Gospels are too late (see page 474). Evidence places the writings closer to the events than previously thought, even within ten years, according to some.

Second, memories were more highly developed in this preliterate culture, making it feasible that all of this was memorized.

Third, even today many persons have memorized much more than this, even whole gospels.

Fourth, Matthew, who has most of the long discourses, was a record keeper by vocation. He may have kept records of Jesus' exact words that were then available for others, just as the early Christian writer Papias said he did (see Eusebius, EH, 3.24.6). [We cannot find this claim in Eusebius]

Fifth, even if these long discourses were summaries and paraphrases of Jesus' exact words, there is no evidence to indicate that they are not accurate. In fact, as we have seen above, all the evidence is to the contrary.

Sixth, Jesus promised supernatural activation of the disciples' memories, saying, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). (*Systematic Theology, Volume 1* [Bethany House, 2002], 490)

Only the last argument is needed, and all the others would be insufficient to reflect the authority of the Gospels.

¹⁷ For arguments that the promise of John 14:25-6 only apply to the Apostles see section 14.13.C.

¹⁸ For a study of these common modes of divine revelation as experienced by Apostles and Prophets see chapters 10.10 and 10.11.

¹⁹ For further discussion of the distinguishing characteristics of apparitions and visions see chapter 10.10.

²⁰ Unfortunately, one of our favorite NT scholars John Stott inexplicably describes Paul's reception of the revelation of the Gospel in Galatians 1:11-12 in this way:

[I]t is much more likely that he [Paul] went into Arabia for quiet and solitude [cf. Gal 1:17 after his conversion] . . . He seems to have stayed there for three years (verse 18). We believe that in this period of withdrawal, as he meditated on the Old Testament Scriptures, on the facts of the life and death of Jesus that he already knew and on his experience of conversion, the gospel of the grace of God was revealed to him in its fullness. (*The Message of Galatians* [Intervarsity, 1968], 34)

If we understand Dr. Stott correctly, he is here denying not only that Christ appeared to Paul to teach Him the Gospel, but he seems to also deny that Paul's knowledge of the Gospel was by supernatural divine revelation at all.

Richard N. Longenecker is no better, claiming that the revelation Paul received of the Gospel was specifically that Gentiles were now part of God's plan, but "as for the basic content of the gospel, Paul was dependent on those who were his Christian predecessors." (*Galatians* (WBC) [Word, 1990], 24). On the contrary, the Apostle said: "**the Gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ**" (1:11-12). "**The Gospel**" he "**preached**" included much more than what Dr. Longenecker would allow. And as far as the Apostle being dependent on "his Christian predecessors" the Apostle adds:

But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. (Gal 1:15-17)

Dr. Barnes and John MacArthur are much more accurate here, the former noting:

That is, he was not appointed by man, nor did he have any human instructor to make known to him what the gospel was. He had neither received it from man, nor had it been debased or adulterated by any human admixtures. He had received it DIRECTLY from the Lord Jesus. (cf. John MacArthur is much more accurate here (*MacArthur's New Testament Commentary* Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM [Parsons Technology, 1997]), Gal 1:10-24)

²¹ The major objection, of course, to the idea that God supernaturally taught the Apostles, but then left them to more natural means to communicate it, is that humans are not capable of sufficiently doing the latter. In other words, what we are suggesting is that God could, in a vision, tell an Apostle a New Covenant truth, and then with their natural

human abilities they were able to faithfully and accurately re-communicate that knowledge without needing divine assistance to guide their mouths as they spoke or minds as they wrote.

We have had repeated occasion throughout *KOG* to remind us that God will not do for us what He has already enabled us to do. And He has enabled us to accurately communicate what has been communicated to us. In other words, we do not need all of the theories of inspiration which try to explain how God supernaturally guided the Apostles speaking or writing, because after He had supernaturally provided the revelation, they could have written the revelation much like any other information. For further discussion on this issue in "inspiration" see chapter 8.10.

²² For further discussion of *mega mysticism* see chapters

²³ Excerpt from section 10.7.C.

²⁴ *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature (BAGD)*, F. W. Danker, ed., 3rd ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 2001).

²⁵ Accordingly, we have written elsewhere concerning auditions:

The above examples of people hearing God's voice clearly occurred in a physical way with people hearing the voice of God with their ears. However, most of the time that Scripture records people hearing God, it is in the context of a vision in which the sound is not physically heard, but is rather "mentally" heard. Nonetheless, it is often difficult to be sure in many cases which kind of divine voice people experienced, the physical one or the mental one. Not only is it difficult to discern the difference in the biblical text, but we would suggest the person themselves could hardly tell the difference because of God's use of the sensical parts of the person's mind while they experienced the vision. In other words, even in a mental vision, it seemed to the person that God was physically speaking to them (cf. 2 Cor 12:1-4).

Accordingly, we cannot be dogmatic about whether the voice of God was experienced in a physical or more psychical way when "**The LORD God commanded the man** [Adam], **saying** [*amar*: "utter," "say"] . . ." (Gen 2:16), or later when "**the LORD God called** [*qara*: "call," "proclaim"] **to the man, 'Where are you?'**" (Gen 3:9). However, the Hebrew words used to describe God's communication, and the fact that the first man and woman clearly experienced God in a physical way, as they "**heard the sound of the LORD God as He was walking in the garden**" (Gen 3:8), strongly suggest they typically experienced God's voice in a physical way as well. We would suggest the same when Samuel first heard God call Him (cf. 1 Sam 3:4-10).

However, even if the voice of God was not experienced physically, it occurred as something "heard" in the person's mind, not just a thought entering the mind in a telepathic way. Unfortunately, many people claim they have heard the voice of God, or that God told them something, when in reality all they experienced was a strong

impression or emotional impulse. They actually didn't hear anything, whether physically or mentally. But again, biblically speaking, people only either heard God's voice audibly such that others could hear it too, or they "heard" His voice in a vision. What many call "hearing God" is not biblically hearing God at all.

Therefore, when we read, "**The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it"** (Acts 8:29), we would suggest that such instruction occurred as an audible sensation, and the incident gives no biblical evidence for the *mega mystical* idea of merely mental "leadings" of the Holy Spirit as so many commonly claim. As we have said, there is no biblical evidence for the idea that God gives us instruction to obey through mere mental promptings. . . .

While God may provide *divine revelation* [through an audition], we can always expect divine authentication to accompany it. God knows that humans are susceptible to the "**delusions of their own minds**" (cf. Jer 14:14; 23:26-28; Col 2:18-19). Not even God expects us to receive any revelation as divine, including either a physical or psychical "voice," until it has been sufficiently authenticated as such. Accordingly, when God first spoke to Moses, He did it from a supernaturally burning bush (cf. Exod 2:1-6; cf. 3:12). Supernatural revelation from God will always be accompanied by undeniable supernatural authentication from God.²⁵ In addition, no "voice of God" will contradict already authenticated revelation such as Scripture. (Excerpted from 10.10.A)

²⁶ I. H. Marshall comments on how the Spirit "spoke" here:

The Spirit is named as the author, since it is he who appoints leaders in the church (20:28) and guides the church at crucial points. But the Spirit speaks through human agencies (4:25), and it must be assumed that one of the prophets in the church received the message. (*Acts (TNTC)* [Eerdmans, 1999], 216)

F. F. Bruce concurs, stating, "the Holy Spirit made known his will to them—doubtless through an inspired utterance from one of their number." (*The Book of the Acts (NICNT)* [Eerdmans, 1988], 245)

²⁷ One indication that the modern second-rate "prophecy" of *prophetism* is just that, is that *prophetists* themselves repeatedly and consistently warn Christians *never* to heed their "prophets" in this manner. Accordingly, we quoted Dr. Grudem above: "There is almost uniform testimony from all sections of the charismatic movement that prophecy is imperfect and impure, and will contain elements that are not to be obeyed or trusted." It seems apparent that Saul and Barnabas did not view real NT Prophets as modern *prophetists* do. For further discussion on the biblical nature of the gift of prophecy see Book 9.

²⁸ BAGD.

²⁹ Opinions vary as to how the Spirit spoke this revelation referred to in 1 Tim 4:1. G. W. Knight thinks Paul is referring to the warnings recorded in the Gospels (i.e. Matt 24:10) (*Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* [Eerdmans, 1992], 188), and Stott suggests the possibility of His

messages in Revelation (*The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus* [Intervarsity, 1996]). However, I. H. Marshall points out: "But this is improbable here, since elsewhere [Christ's] teaching is attributed to him personally as the Lord [not the Spirit] (*The Pastoral Epistles* [T & T Clark, 1999], 537). Gordon Fee and Dr. Stott suggest the possibility of "the Spirit speaking to Paul as he writes [inspiration?]," apparently based on the present tense of *legei* (1 & 2 Timothy & Titus [Hendricksen, 1988], 98). But again, Marshall points out:

Legei (pres. tense) introduces a statement which remains valid though spoken in the past [cf. 1 Tim 5:18; Rom 4:3, 6; 9:15 etc.].

There is, therefore, no need for the explanation that the author means that the Spirit is speaking to him even as he is writing (Ibid.).

Dr. Marshall offers support for the idea that the Spirit's utterance here had come through a Christian Prophet, referring to Rev 2:7; 14:13; 22:17 and C. K. Barrett (537). Gordon Fee suggests this as well in his commentary, but more strongly argues for it in his *God's Empowering Presence* (Hendricksen, 1994, 769). MacArthur does not comment on this.

³⁰ Dr. Barnes commented on the guidance of the Spirit described in Acts 16:6-7 as "Probably by a direct revelation." Nonetheless, most commentators put a *mega mystical* spin on this passage. John Stott writes:

[H]ow the Holy Spirit did his preventive work on these two occasions we can only guess. It may have been through giving the missionaries a strong, united inward impression, or through some outward circumstance like illness, Jewish opposition or a legal ban, or through the utterance of a Christian prophet, perhaps Silas himself (15:32). (*Acts, in loc*)

"[S]trong, united inward impression," or interpreting "some outward circumstance like illness" or "Jewish opposition" is the language of *mega mysticism* and has no biblical support whatsoever. How in the world would these men know that a mere "inward impression" was the Holy Spirit's prohibition to go somewhere? It just as well could have been heartburn from what they had eaten for lunch. "The utterance of a Christian prophet" is the only suggestion with biblical merit.

Likewise, I. H. Marshall writes: "Presumably some inner compulsion is meant, or perhaps a prophetic utterance by one of the party" (*Acts*, 262).

Along the same lines, F. F. Bruce commented:

Paul's missionary journeys display an extraordinary combination of strategic planning and keen sensitiveness to the guidance of the Spirit of God, however that guidance was conveyed—by prophetic utterance, inward prompting, or the overruling of external circumstances. (*Acts*, 307).

On the contrary, God ensures that His commands do not require "keen sensitiveness," to notice them, but will be readily perceived.

Dr. MacArthur is hardly better in this regard, commenting: "The missionary team's experience illustrates a basic principle of knowing God's will: to move ahead and allow Him to close doors until the right opportunity is reached." Discerning open and closed doors in our

circumstances in an attempt to decipher a divine command that must be obeyed is again, *mega mystical* language and not biblical.

For further discussion regarding *mega mysticism* see Book 14. For further discussion on how Paul was led by reason in his decision making see section 4.4.A.

- ³¹ For a suggested chronology of Paul's life and ministry see F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Eerdmans, 1977), 475.
- ³² Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians* (Eerdmans, 1985), 201. Most modern commentators agree (cf. Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Eerdmans, 2000), 1186-87; C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Hendrickson, 1968), 337; Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Eerdmans, 1987), 721-22). However, older commentators maintained that Paul was referring to direct revelation from Christ (cf. Calvin, *Commentaries*; online at www.ccel.org; Barnes, Hodge, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*; online at www.ccel.org). John MacArthur interprets this as meaning the Apostle received it from OT Scripture (*Commentary*).