

Friend

I rarely take the time to respond to folks because many times people just wanna debate and are antagonistic. But I am sensing you have a good heart and an honest mind so I am happy to respond a bit to your comments and irenic tone.

I doubt I will have time to respond further since there are a lot of things on my plate right now and travel is picking up again.

Hi Steve,

Thank you. I really appreciate the reply, the quote from your book, and the correction. I have been researching the Moses seat extensively the last couple of years, which I think is how I came across your video.

I love visiting all of the biblical sites. I've been to Israel over 180 times and that doesn't count all our trips to Egypt and Jordan and Syria and Iraq and more. I too love to study scripture in the context of culture of the time.

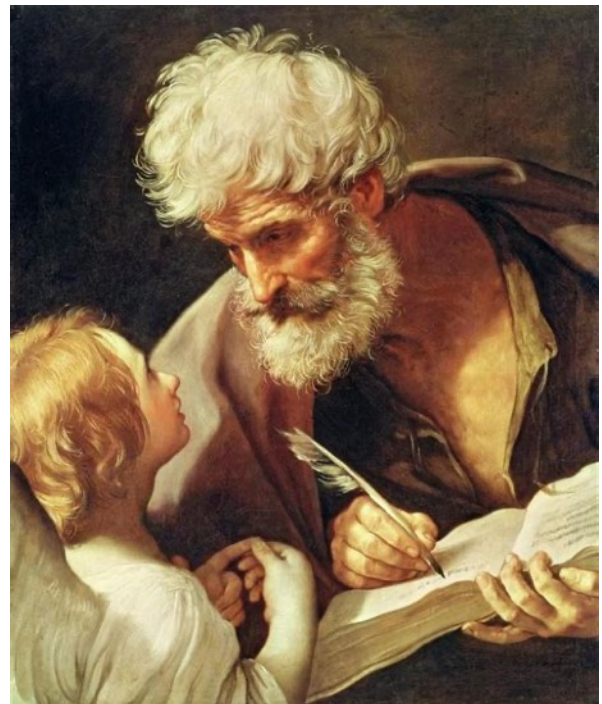
Also, in response to our earlier conversation, I do not believe in the infallible interpretation because the two commentators said so. I believe in it because it is biblical and Catholic. I quoted those two Lutheran commentators in my YouTube because I find it curious that Protestants who often times criticize Catholics for believing in an infallible interpretation would use that phrase regarding a fallible person, even though a biblical character. They said that Joseph in Genesis was giving the "infallible gift of interpretation of dreams." I believe in the infallible teaching of the church because it is the way the church has organically grown and developed which I'll explain later.

I understand your point, though I respectfully disagree with the "extrapolation" theory. I don't think the interpretation of dreams equates to infallible teaching authority over God's Word. There's a lot to unpack and obviously debates on these things will always persist. I'll share a few thoughts but I'm a little pressed for time and don't want to take up too much of yours, either...(but apologies in advance, I can be long winded :-)

I don't think it is an extrapolation. I think it's the ability of God to give fallible man an infallible interpretation, dreams or anything he wills. He wants us to have clarity and certainty, not confusion and a thousand interpretations and sects.

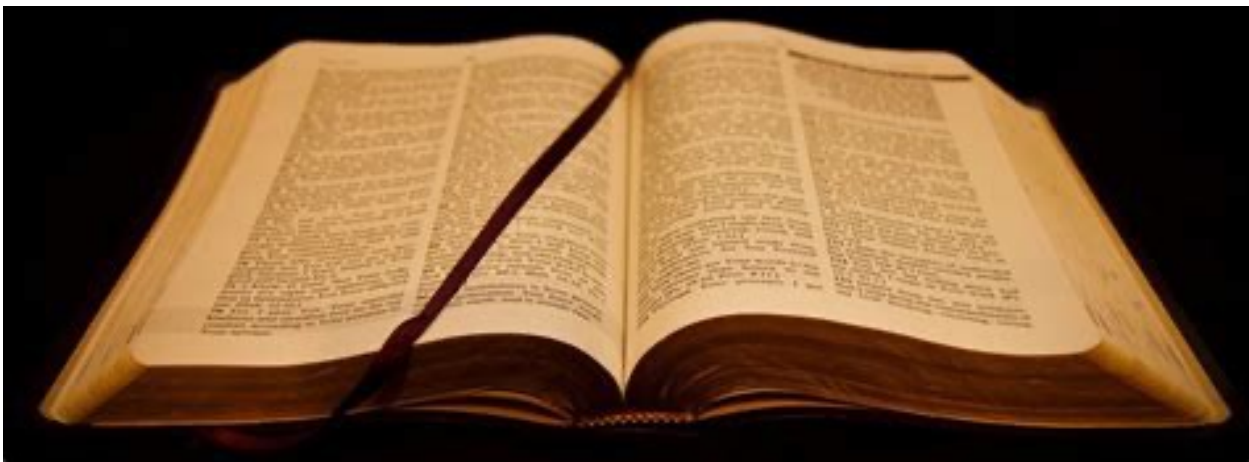
But even more so, what is more significant than giving fallible men (the Church) the gift of infallible interpretation, is the ability and practice of God to give fallible men the ability to write inspired infallible words with their quill and ink and their very verbal words as well (e.g., 1 Thes 2:13).

Fallible men like Moses and Matthew and Paul use their own words but are actually speaking/writing the infallible word of God. And if a man can write the actual words of God, then it is a much lesser thing for a fallible man and a simple man, like the pope, to be able to infallibly interpret the word of God — or dreams.



And of course, if you are as studied as you suggest, you know that the Catholic Church does not teach that whatever the pope says or does is infallible. Especially this pope! But, there are certain conditions under which by the guidance of the Holy Spirit the pope and the church speak infallibly for God, interpreting the Scripture and the Apostolic Tradition. I know that makes the hair rise up on the back of many Protestants, as it did me when I was a Baptist Bible teacher.

One such infallible interpretation or decision was the closing of the canon of the Bible. Even the Jews throughout their centuries did not have a closed canon. Even during the time of Christ this was so. The Sadducees had only the Pentateuch, the Pharisees excepted pretty much the Bible of the Protestants today, The Greek-speaking Jews with their Septuagint had a larger set of writings. the Essenes had a much broader understanding of “the writings.” Some suggest that the Council of Jamnia in around 90 AD is the point for the Jews closed their canon. However this is inaccurate.



Never do you find in Jewish history or the time of Christ that it was expected or predicted that additional inspired writings would be added or appended to the “Law and the Prophets”. It was the

Church that closed the canon of scripture at the end of the 4th century. And Christians today of all stripes pretty much accept that authority of the Church when they carry their Bibles to church with them on Sunday. We don't need prior explicit mentions of the NT in the Old or in Jewish tradition to accept the authority of the Church to authoritatively and infallibly to establish additional writings to the Bible.

Who would've ever thought at the time of Jesus that there would be 27 books added to the "written word of God"? But I'm getting ahead of myself.

I am not aware of anything in Scripture or in ancient Jewish literature that indicates Jews had such a concept of infallibility. If you have any specific references to such a concept, I'd love to see them (not ones that are logically woven together into a conclusion...I'm well aware of those, but a specific, Jewish use/definition of such a term - or similar one, maybe 'inerrant'). It would be one thing if we read that in Genesis, or elsewhere, but we don't. It's simply a term that these commentators use. Indeed, interpreting a dream seems like a discrete, black or white issue. Either you know what it means, or you don't. Clearly, Scripture is much broader and not on par with the dream of a Pharaoh...and it is the Word of God!

I've already addressed this above pretty much. If God can give infallible interpretations of dreams, he can certainly do more than that as I proved above by giving men the ability to write inspired, God-breathed, infallible text.

You may not see the word "infallible" used in the Pentateuch or in the prophets because the word was not in vogue back then, but no one would deny Moses spoke for God and nobody would question him as to his infallibility. When Korah and the others

challenged Moses and his authority, the ground opened up and swallowed them and fire consumed 250 men (Numbers 16; Jude 11).

We only find the word “inspired” once in the whole Bible and that’s in 2 Timothy 3:16. Even though we don’t see the word “inspired” used of Moses in the Old Testament (nor does 2 Tim 3:16 explicitly refer to the NT), no one would dare say that he was not.

We use words today that may not have used back then but just because we don’t find the word “inspired” or “infallible” in the writings of “the Law and the Prophets” doesn’t mean they didn’t believe in it 100%. Just like we don’t find our word Trinity until the second or third century, yet you and I both will die for the doctrine of the Trinity even though it’s not a word used in the Bible but we certainly know the actuality there in the Bible.

With Joseph, we know he was a God-fearing man of faith and character (my terms, but I think clearly see in passages like [Genesis 39:7–9](#) and [Hebrews 11:22](#)). Even if one "extrapolates" such a concept as general infallibility, what indication do we have that God bestows such a blessing on people that are unfaithful, simply because of their position? Joseph wasn't given this gift **because** of his position in the palace...

God can give that gift to anybody in any situation. He even used Balaam’s ass to speak his word to Balaam. If the ass could interpret the intentions of God and speak them accurately to Balaam, I suggest God could use just about anyone. It seems Caiaphas had the same “gift” at one point (John 11:49-52). And if God gives a certain



man a position of authority where it's important that his word is spoken accurately, I do believe that that position can be accompanied by infallible interpretation. Of course I would believe that, because I'm a Catholic and it's what we believe. But we believe it with very good biblical and historical reasons.

The same is true of Moses. In your video, you also said: "Moses took his seat...cathedra." In Exodus 18:13, it says he "sat" (verb). I acknowledge the concept and it's legal connotations (which even carries into our cultures, today) but there 1) isn't any concept of infallibility described anywhere that I'm aware of and; 2) isn't any evidence of an actual object that represents singular, infallible, authority, anywhere through Jewish history, up through the second temple period that Jesus is born into. There were three primary roles of authority...king, high priest, and prophet. None of them are ever described as having infallible interpretation. Well, prophets would be an interesting study, clearly true prophecies are "infallible" but they are individuals that God raises up, not a genealogical line and they didn't hold the "authority." All three of these roles come together in Christ.

Yes, it is a verb, but the verb assumes a object — something to sit on, which is the chair. It was a chair of Moses and thus representing his authority when he sat there. You noticed a chink in your armor there with the prophets. Because God did call a cadre of men called prophets who did speak infallibly, and even



though we know they spoke infallibly and interpreted past scripture and current events infallibly, they never use the word because that word was not in vogue back then but no one would have doubted the concept existed.

Also, we do not believe that infallibility in the Catholic Church is based on genealogy. But remember that the priesthood and the kingship in Israel were based on genealogy. Even prophets were known at times to pass on their authority to successor, e.g., Elijah to Elisha.



I also agree that there was no specific office of “infallibility”, specifically stated, in the Old Testament though the Jews may have argued with us on that matter. (In fact we never see in the NT the word infallible or inerrant regarding Paul, though no one would doubt in the NT he is infallibly interpreting the OT, especially the passages he quotes from the OT).

In the Mishnah, which as you know is a compilation of Jewish tradition around the time of Christ. It could of course be dismissed because it was after the time of Christ, bi it is certainly a good thermometer for Jewish thought, not just after Christ, but also during his time and earlier. It was an attempt to put down the traditions and teachings of the rabbis down through their past. The Mishnah states,

“ABOT 1:1 A: Moses received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets.

B And prophets handed it on to the men of the great assembly.”

One cannot dismiss this out of hand because it was after the destruction of the Temple since the Targums and Mishnah was the effort of the post-Temple Jews to recall and document the earlier customs and traditions of the Jews.



There was always an office to go to to inquire of God. It was always assumed this office as handed down in succession would speak the true word of God. However, since the Holy Spirit had not been sent yet we know that we could never consider that infallible. The coming of the Holy Spirit can and does change all that, especially in the leadership of his Body, the Church which he made promises to.

Here there could be interpreted a teaching authority, whether infallible or not it doesn't mention, where the authority to properly teach and govern is handed on through delegated offices which God establishes. The Jews saw a succession of authority, and I would suggest, of interpreting the word of God.

With the church, there is a whole new economy. No longer is it just among the Jews but it is now worldwide and God establishes a universal Church, which is also a government which is universal. It would behoove him to make sure that his words were properly taught and interpreted to avoid the confusion we see

today in Christianity. If you want to see how this played out in the early church get a copy of my book [“Upon This Rock, Saint Peter and the Primacy of Rome in Scripture and in the Early Church.”](#)

All the offices of the Old Testament do culminate in the person of Jesus Christ. And it is through Jesus Christ and his Mystical Body, the Church, that true justice and fallible interpretation can be administered.

One last thought on this point and a few quotes from the Talmud. It seems here, though not using the word “infallible” Moses specifically, and other judges having received such authority actually are turned into a partner of creation with the Holy One,

([Picture: A facsimile of Chair of Moses found in Chorazin synagogue](#))

"But it is to tell you: Any judge who judges a case in truth and fidelity even for a single moment is regarded by Scripture as though he were turned into a partner of the Holy One, blessed be He, in the works of creation. *For here it is written*, ‘And the people stood about Moses from the morning unto the evening’ (Ex. 18:13), *and elsewhere*, ‘And there was evening, and there was morning, one day.’” (Jacob Neusner, [The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary](#), vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 33.)



“B. Would Moses really sit and judge Israel from morning until evening? Don’t judges sit only up to mealtime? C. Rather, Scripture attributes to anyone who judges truthfully as if he is a partner in the act of Creation. D. Scripture states here “from morning until evening” (Exod. 18:13), and Scripture states above “And there was evening and there was morning” (Gen. 1:5).” (W. David Nelson, [*Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai*](#) (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 203.

"Said R. Huna, "The dispute pertains to the time of the debate, but as to the time that the judgment has been reached, all parties concur that the judges are to be sitting and the litigants standing, as it is written, 'And Moses sat to judge the people and the people stood' (Ex. 18:13)." (Jacob Neusner, [*The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*](#), vol. 18a (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 128.)

And to suggest that there is no evidence of a chair or throne of Moses (which was passed on to Joshua) we read in the *Legends of the Jews* a story which takes place before Moses death as he passes his authority and the golden throne to Joshua, "After all these preparations had been made, he bade the herald proclaim: "Moses stands at Joshua's gate and announces that whosoever wishes to hear God's word should betake himself to Joshua, for he, according to God's word, is the leader of Israel. ... When Joshua was completely dressed and ready to go out, they reported to him and to Moses that all Israel awaited them. Moses thereupon laid his hand upon Joshua to lead him out of the tent, and quite against Joshua's wish insisted upon giving precedence to him as they stepped forth. When Israel saw Joshua precede Moses, they all trembled, arose, and made room for these two to proceed to the place of the great, where stood the golden throne, upon which Moses seated Joshua against his will. All Israel burst

into tears when they saw Joshua upon the golden throne, and he said amid tears, “Why all this greatness and honor to me?”

Louis Ginzberg, Henrietta Szold, and Paul Radin, [*Legends of the Jews*](#), 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 811–812. And what is this throne but the chair of Moses and Moses was passing on his authority and the chair/throne.

Inspired Scripture, no, but it does carry forward the Jewish idea of a chair or throne of Moses that represented his authority that was successively passed on to Joshua.

Also, the Council, mentioned in the Mishnah has been seen as sitting on the authority now occupying the chair of Moses: "approved of by our Saviour, when he saith, “Ye ought not to have left these undone.” Hear this, O thou who opposest tithes. The tithing of herbs was only of ecclesiastical institution, and yet it hath the authority of our Saviour to confirm it, “Ye ought not to have left these things undone:” and that partly on account of the justice of the thing itself, and the agreeableness of it to law and reason, **partly that it was commanded by the council sitting in Moses’s chair, as it is, ver. 2.** (John Lightfoot, [*A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica, Matthew-1 Corinthians, Matthew-Mark*](#), vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 298.) And this is not a Catholic commentary but a serious and scholarly Protestant commentator commenting on the Talmud and Hebraica.

And from the Jewish New Testament Commentary, "**2 The seat** (Greek *kathedra*) **of Moshe**. The Midrash Rabbah says: “They made for him [Moses] a *katedra* like that of the advocates, in which one sits and yet seems to be standing.” (Exodus Rabbah 43:4), *Pesikta diRav Kahana* 1:7 mentions the seat of Moses, and the editors of the English edition comment: “The particular place in the synagogue where the leaders used to sit was known

metaphorically as **the seat of Moses or as the throne of Torah, symbolizing the succession of teachers of Torah down through the ages.**" (William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, *Pesikta diRav Kahana*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975, p. 17)

A third-century c.e. "Chair of Moses" from Korazin (11:21) is on display at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem; a photograph and description may be found in *Biblical Archeology Review* 13:5 (1987), pp. 32–35. According to the Hebrew University scholarly journal *Tarbitz* I, p. 145, they can also be found in Hamot, Tiberias and Delos (Greece).

The *Torah*-teachers and the *Prushim* ... sit in the seat of Moshe, exercising the power of "the *cohen* or judge in office at that time" (Deuteronomy 17:8–13), officially interpreting the *Torah*. There are some who



understand this verse to mean that, according to Yeshua, the Oral *Torah*, as expounded in Orthodox Judaism, is binding on Messianic Jews today. I do not believe this, because I think Yeshua had already initiated a process transferring halakhic authority from the *cohanim*, judges and rabbis to the emissaries and later leaders of the Messianic Community. See 18:18–20&N and *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, Chapter V." (David H. Stern, [*Jewish New Testament Commentary : A Companion Volume to the Jewish New Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1996), Mt 23:2.)

In other words, the authority of the chair was passed on to the Church's leaders. This is followed through with these two of many quotes I could provide from the Fathers of the Church and the early Christians (much more in my book *Upon this Rock*).

"Ezekiel the Tragedian (late third or early second century b.c.e.), in his play *The Exagōgē*, depicts Moses as a universal king (lines 68–89). Moses dreams that God asks him to take God's place on a great throne on the top of Mt. Sinai, along with God's crown and scepter. From the throne Moses can see the whole world, at which point the stars fall at his feet." (Kenneth E. Pomykala, ["Kingship,"](#) in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 863.)

In a Hellenistic Jewish drama, the *Exagōgē* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, there is a dream of Moses in which he sees a great throne on Mt. Sinai where a noble man is seated, wearing a royal crown and holding a scepter. He then calls Moses and gives him the royal crown, which is later interpreted by Jethro as predicting that Moses will be a judge and leader of humankind (Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 9.24.4–6). (Esther Eshel, ["Self-Glorification Hymn,"](#) in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 1215.)

"Other passages speak directly of Moses' installation with royal status in heaven: "God gave him a rank which no king is able to possess, and God appointed him below and entrusted him with the unseen world,") Like Enoch in some Jewish traditions Moses "sat on a great throne and wrote what his Lord had taught him.) Similarly, the rod he received from God ("from the fire") is a

sceptre of sovereignty: “This will be a wonder to you—in it is great and powerful rulership (*saṭṭanu*)”)

The crown, the robe, the throne, the sceptre received from God: all these are varying aspects of the imagery of Moses’ enthronement in heaven at the time of the Sinai revelation. This Samaritan imagery is much more concrete than Philo’s, but it is strikingly similar to that of the Tanḥuma homily quoted above and also to that of a Greek Jewish source much older than Philo. The latter, a verse drama of “The Exodus” written by a certain Ezekiel sometime before the first century B.C.E.,) casts Moses’ enthronement in the form of a dream. Moses sees a “noble man” (*phōs gennaios*) seated on a “great throne” at “the peak of Mt. Sinai.” The figure gives to Moses his own “royal diadem,” “mighty sceptre,” and the throne itself.) The interpretation of the dream predicts that Moses “will establish a great throne;” the dream itself has made clear that his reign is on behalf of God.” (Wayne A. Meeks, [“Moses as God and King,”](#) in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol. XIV, Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to Numen) (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004), 358–359.)

To suggest that the Chorazim Synagogue alone had a Chair of Moses is incorrect. We read, “The synagogue on Delos has extant an elaborate seat or throne called by scholars the “Throne of Moses” and was possibly used by the teacher, preacher, or head of the community or for some particular rituals (compare the



“Seat of Elijah,” below). Such iconography, though sparse, is a clear emphasis on the ritual practices celebrating the Torah Judaism that commemorates the Jerusalem Temples and characterizes the Jewish experience.” (Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, and William Scott Green, eds., in [The Encyclopedia of Judaism](#) (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 2000), 1764.) Other synagogues also had a chair of Moses.

"4. A. *And the top of the throne was round behind* (1 Kgs. 10:19):

B. Said R. Aha, “It was like the throne of Moses.”

C. *And there were arms on either side of the throne by the place of the seat* (1 Kgs. 10:19):

D. How so? There was a scepter of gold suspended from behind, with a dove on the top, and a crown of gold in the dove’s mouth, and he [Moses] would sit under it on the Sabbath, and it would touch but not quite touch [I am not sure whether the “it” is the dove, scepter, crown, or what.]” (Jacob Neusner, [Introduction to Rabbinic Literature](#) (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), 431.)

Referring to Maimonides, the great Jewish scholar and commentator we read, "A case in point is his treatment of the Liturgy. Here, he accepts as established only what is Talmudic; everything else he either omits, refutes, or at its best tolerates as *minhag*. Such reverence was based on the conviction that the Pharisees sat on the throne of Moses and that the Talmudic sages were the heirs of the prophets.” (Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, [“Mediæval Judaism and the Law,”](#) in *Judaism and Christianity: Law and Religion*, ed. Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, vol. III (London; New York: The Sheldon



Press; The Macmillan Company, 1938), 194.)

The Talmud states the authority of the Rabbis. They are the legitimate heirs of the prophets of the Old Testament. *Prophecy was taken away from the prophets and given to the wise, and it has not been taken away from these (b. B. Bathra, 12^b).* (Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, "[Mediæval Judaism and the Law](#)," in *Judaism and Christianity: Law and Religion*, ed. Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, vol. III (London; New York: The Sheldon Press; The Macmillan Company, 1938), 174.)

"Exegetical Protestant scholar of the New Testament Floyd V. Filson, informs us, "The scribes, mostly Pharisees, copied, taught, and applied the Mosaic Law. They were pledged to obey and teach both the written law and the oral tradition, which they claimed was an integral part of the Law, *received through a direct succession of teachers going back to Moses....* Moses' seat [was a] synagogue chair which symbolized the origin and authority of their teaching. Jesus does not challenge their claim; he seems here to approve it." (Floyd V. Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 243; emphasis added.)



My point in all of the above is to show that it is incorrect to assume that Jesus was speaking a novelty and that the idea of the chair or throne of Moses was foreign to Jewish thought. I am

sure there are more but I have only a short time today to finish writing.

Anyway, the Moses seat, by all indications, is something Jesus named and it appears to be a ~1st century innovation. Matthew 23 is the first mention of it anywhere, no Jewish literature speaks of it and all of the archeological finds are from the time of Christ, no earlier. None of them carry such an inscription. In fact, as I'm sure you are well aware, the one in Chorazin bore an inscription of the guy that donated it (presumably - but not "Seat of Moses." They also do not have the structural consistency and apparent prominence of other Synagogue features, like the Torah Arks. It's a very interesting and complicated area of study, but this is what's known. I picked up a copy of [this book](#) (it's not light reading...LOL), probably the most comprehensive set of information on early Synagogues. If you don't have it or have access to it and ever want me to look up a specific topic, I'd be glad to and send you scans.

You're very kind and considerate and I appreciate that. I'll take a look at the book and see if I can find a copy because I love this type of study and these contextual studies. I'm also happy to share resources with you.

I think the quotes I've briefly provided above will show that the idea of a chair of Moses was not a novelty nor was it foreign to Jewish thought. I would be very suspicious of any suggestion that Jesus was speaking a novelty into a very Jewish crowd. It would nullify his whole point if the chair of Moses was not a known and respected seat of authority in the Jewish community. Jesus was a master teacher, and by the fact he mentioned the Chair of Moses, certainly means that his audience was very familiar with the chair and its meaning.

I will later provide a footnote from my book *Upon This Rock* in a moment, but just for simplicity's sake, Moses took his seat, yes a verb, but he sat on some thing which was recognized by the people as a place where Moses interpreted the word of God for them.

And following that, Jesus refers to the chair of Moses or Moses' seat. This could not have been an arbitrary new innovation because the people would not understand what he was saying or the implications he was making. It was obviously something understood and

practiced at the time or Jesus would not of wasted his time to use it. Jesus was thoroughly a 1st century Judean/Galilean Jew — he did not mince words or speak things into a culture that he and his listeners were not fully aware aware of. They knew what he meant and how he was using it. And the fact that there was a chair of Moses at Chorazin and others, would fit perfectly and amplify what Jesus said.

I am curious, where did you learn of the supposed link between Exodus 18:13 and Matthew 23:2? I can't find that in ANY literature, church fathers, etc. In fact, I haven't been able to trace that back any further than your website, circa 2006.



I am obviously not the first to make the correlation. It is made elsewhere I am sure, but here is one clear example of the correlation:

"1. Moses As Mediator of the Law. In the Synoptics the expressions "the Law/book of Moses" (Mk 12:26; Lk 2:22; 24:44) or simply "Moses" (Lk 16:29, 31; 24:27) appear to denote the Pentateuch. Most references tie Moses to specific laws, such as those concerning circumcision (Lk 2:22; cf. Lev 12:2–8; Ex 13:2, 12), the offering after the cleansing of a leper (Mt 8:4 par. Mk 1:44 and Lk 5:14; cf. Lev 13:49; 14:2–32; see Leprosy), honoring parents (Mk 7:10; cf. Ex 20:12; 21:17; Lev 20:9), divorce* (Mt 19:7–8 par. Mk 10:3–5; cf. Deut 24:1–4) and levirate marriage (Mt 22:24 par. Mk 12:19 and Lk 20:28; cf. Deut 25:5). Only one passage refers to narrative, namely the dialog at the burning bush (Mk 12:26 par. Lk 20:37; cf. Ex 3:6). In the above passages Jesus, the Pharisees*, the Sadducees, and in one instance the Evangelist Luke, regard Moses as the mediator of the Law. **Matthew 23:2 refers to "Moses' seat" (cf. Ex 18:13), an office in which the scribes* and Pharisees claim to carry on the exposition of the Law.**" (C. C. Broyles, "[Moses](#)," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 560.)

Church Fathers:

St. Macarius of Egypt (c a.d. 300–c. 390) saw the same connection. He wrote, "For of old Moses and Aaron, when this priesthood was theirs, suffered much; and Caiphas, **when he had their chair**, persecuted and condemned the Lord.... Afterwards **Moses was succeeded by Peter**, who had committed to his hands the new Church of Christ, and the true priesthood." (Stephen K. Ray, [Upon This Rock: St. Peter and the Primacy of](#)

[Rome in Scripture and the Early Church](#), Modern Apologetics Library (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 293.)

Cyprian of Carthage (d. a.d. 258) This single chair certainly hearkens back to the chair of Moses. But the new Israel has a new chair, based on the chair of the old. It is now the chair of Peter.

“The Lord says to Peter: ‘I say to you,’ He says, ‘that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it. And to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and

whatever things you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth, they shall be loosed also in heaven.’ And again He says to him after His resurrection: ‘Feed my sheep.’ On him He builds the Church, and to him He gives the command to feed the sheep; and although He assigns a like power to all the Apostles, yet **He founded a single chair**, and He established by His own authority a source and an intrinsic reason for that unity. Indeed, the others were that also which Peter was;



but a primacy is given to Peter, whereby it is made clear that **there is but one Church and one chair**. So too, all are shepherds, and the flock is shown to be one, fed by all the Apostles in single-minded accord. If someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he desert the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can

he still be confident that he is in the Church?" (*The Unity of the Catholic Church* 4, written between a.d. 251 and 256, in Jurgens, *Faith of the Early Fathers*, 1:220.)

I think that if we interpret Scripture with Scripture it flows quite well from one to the other. It is the organic outgrowth of God's revelation and the organic development of the New Covenant in the Church following from the Jewish "sentiments" and the content of the OT.

This quote from the Protestant *Bible Background Commentary* mentions the chair of Moses as it was in context of the ancient world. I find especially interesting where he comments on the vizier of Egypt,

"18:13–27. Moses' seat. The seat of the judge is a designated seat of authority when the judge's "court" was "in session." In cities this seat was usually at the entrance to the gate. Jethro advises Moses to establish a hierarchical judiciary with Moses at the top, as a king would have been in a monarchy, and as a priest or family patriarch would have been in tribal societies. In this structure it is recognized that some disputes can be settled on point of law or by objective discretion (for information concerning the judiciary system in the ancient Near East, see comment on Deut 1:9–18). Such cases can be settled in the lower levels.

"In the absence of sufficient evidence in complex or serious cases, the matter was handled "prophetically"—that is, it was brought before God. This was where Moses' involvement was essential. It separates the "civil" aspects of the judiciary, in which Moses did not have to be involved, from the "religious" aspects. *This system is not unlike that found in Egypt, where Pharaoh guaranteed justice but set up a system headed by the vizier, who was the "Prophet of Ma'at" (Ma'at is the goddess of truth and justice) and occupied the judgment chair. The establishment of*

this system formalized a sociological, if not political, role for Moses that moved Israel beyond being a purely tribal society to being a quasi-centralized government.” (Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Ex 18:13–27.)

Also in a book dealing with Jewish apologetics: "The third passage ... may speak directly to what Yeshua had in mind. "And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening.... 'When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws.'" (Ex. 18:13–16) ...

"Before Moses died and the people went into the land, he made provision for the continuance of civil order. There had to be others who would sit and judge in the place of Moses. "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the Everpresent your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment." (Dt. 16:18)



"The Talmud refers to this as well. "Since he is so wise, let him sit in the gate and act as judge." (Baba Bathra 58a) Such judges were acting in the place of Moses. When they sat to judge, they were sitting in his seat, exercising the authority that God had

given to him. The responsibility to teach Torah, the laws of purity, etc. was also delegated, but it was delegated to the priests. (cf. Dt. 24:8; Mal. 2:6–9; Hag. 2:11) The priests also exercised the judicial function sometimes, but they were not the only ones who did.” (Michael L. Brown, [*Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Traditional Jewish Objections*](#), vol. 5 (San Francisco, CA: Purple Pomegranate Productions, 2009), 258.)

And we Catholics see Jesus as the King who sets up his vizier (Peter) in his new government of which the Church is the final authority or court of appeals through Peter and the apostles, and obviously their successors (e.g., Mt 18:17, etc.).

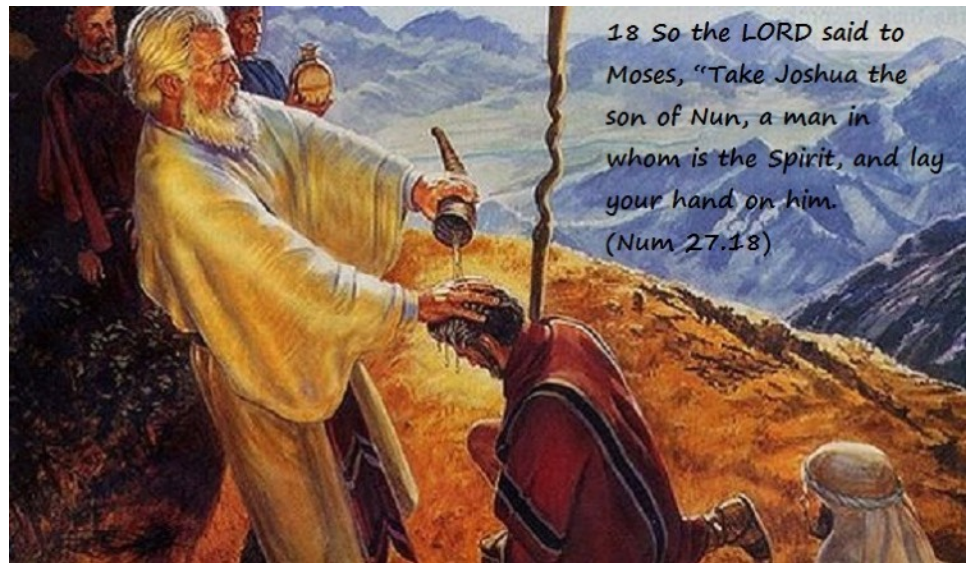


With Moses, too, he was clearly a man of faith and character. There's no indication he had any "authority" by virtue of his position, receiving that blessing irrespective of the gift of faith he had. I recently came across an interesting [Mishnaic Midrash](#) that would have been part (a very small part of something mind numbingly complex) of the Pharisees/Scribes oral tradition. How many allusions to Christ can you find in a simple paragraph? Amazing, isn't it? Clearly they didn't "infallibly interpret" this.

I would suggest that the office of Moses and the accompanying authority is displayed when he transfers his authority and dignity to another man taking his position — Joshua. Moses had the authority by virtue of the position that he was given and now that authority was passed on to the new holder of that office or position. Succession....

Numbers

27:18-20: "So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all



the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey."

Neither Joseph, nor Moses were elected or otherwise inherited their "authority" either. In both cases, it was a sovereign act of God by which they were saved and supernaturally placed where they were. And both were prototypes of Christ...saved by God, in spite of the evil in men.

Although Joshua inherited the authority of Moses. He was appointed by a sovereign act of God, through Our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Royal Steward of his kingdom, the new Israel.

Peter and his successors were appointed supernaturally by Jesus (God) for a position of leading his Church. Like the Royal Stewards of the OT (e.g., Shebna and Eliakim in Isaiah 22) the office was successive. When the Royal Steward died, they did not dispose of the keys, but handed them on to a successor. And we would say the same of Peter in Matthew 16 receiving the keys of the kingdom (cf. Isaiah 22:22) that would eventually be handed on to a successor, just as the keys were in the OT economy.

Lastly (sorry I've been so long), my research into the oral tradition of the Scribes/Pharisees has demonstrated that they were likely NOT teaching any of that from the "Moses seat." I've attached a couple scans from Joachim Jeremias' book: [*Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus*](#). He describes the "esoteric" interpretation of Scripture that Scribes actually considered inappropriate to teach the common Jews. They treated it as so sacred, you had to progress through the ranks and the higher your status (scribes were a minimum of 40 y/o and had been studying a lifetime), the fewer were allowed to receive the teaching. The more sacred, the more secret.

And the Pope does not actually teach from the chair of Peter which is in St. John Lateran, but from St. Peter's as the chair is for all intents and purposes now seen as symbolic symbol of the authority, as probably it was to a great degree in Israel during the time of Christ. When Jesus mentions the "chair of Peter" it does not *necessary* dictate an actual chair, but the authority of the chair in line with Moses and teaching his law with his authority. However, even if symbolic, finding chairs in synagogues may imply more.

So, what was Jesus telling the people to "listen to...whatever they tell you" in Matthew 23:3? Not the Oral Torah, but I think Scripture tells us...

Let Jesus speak for himself; we don't need to put words in his mouth. He said, "so do and observe whatever they tell you." He could have made a qualification "only when quoting Moses directly" but he did not. You are free of course to assume that, but it is now what he said. His qualification was with what they *did*, not what they taught. Do what they say, don't do what they do. In fact, without the oral tradition they would not have known how to worship in the tabernacle and later in the Temple since the details were not written down but were passed on by the oral tradition and actual practice. Very little of the actual liturgical actions are taught in the Pentateuch.

In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses says: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers —**it is to him you shall listen.**" It's an interesting parallel to Matthew 23:3 and it's quoted elsewhere, including in Stephen's sermon. As the Scribes and Pharisees were reading from the Law of Moses and the utterances of the Prophets on the Sabbath in the Synagogues (Acts 13:27 and 15:21), when Jesus says: "do what they tell you" ...they were literally telling the people to listen to Jesus and revealing the prophecies pointing to Him and didn't even realize it.

When I am on Mount Tabor with our groups I tell them that they cannot understand the Transfiguration without first understanding Mount Sinai. That is why the name of the mountain in the synoptic gospels is not mentioned. It just says, he "led them up a high mountain" (Mt 17:1) which was to spark their



memory and imagination to think of the OTHER high mountain prominent in Scripture, which of course, is Mount Sina. Even Luke's mention of Jesus discussing with Elijah and Moses is "departure" which will soon take place from Jerusalem.

Of course the word *departure* in Greek is *exodus* which is to again draw attention to Moses leading the first exodus (Red Sea = water baptism, 1 Peter 3:21, manna = Eucharist, John 6) in preparation for Jesus's final exodus leading the chosen people to heaven. At both mountains we hear the words "listen to him". The apostles then heard God speak from the New High Mountain (1,900 feet) saying "Listen to Him" with a smile, reminding them of Deuteronomy 18:15, 18.



You are correct that the people should think of Jesus when hearing these words in the OT law and prophets, but just as God used men to infallibly interpret dreams and infallibly write his word and interpret it, he continues to do the same today. And as the whole early Church understood, that was the job of the new hierarchy and leadership of the New Israel, the Church.

I have added a dictionary quote below, along with two points from my book. I too apologize for the length, but this I love to do! Scripture and the history of our faith is a joy to learn and study. I have found becoming Catholic to add so much to these studies.

Scott, I also appreciate your e-mail and your gentle and genuine tone of a real follower of Our Lord Jesus and a good Christian. Happy and better New Year to you as well.

I will not have time to respond further since I have a lot on my plate right now, including the final edits for my commentary on Genesis being published by Ignatius Press later this year.

MOSES' SEAT* Biblical expression occurring only in Matthew 23:2, where Jesus speaks of the scribes and the Pharisees as having sat down on the seat of Moses. In biblical times, the seat that one occupied usually indicated the degree of rank or respect one claimed for himself or was to receive from others (Mt 23:6). Sitting on "Moses' seat" referred to a place of dignity and the right to interpret the Mosaic law. The scribes were the successors and the heirs of Moses' authority and were rightfully looked to for pronouncements upon his teaching.

In the context of Matthew 23:2, Jesus does not seem to challenge this right, for he commands his hearers to practice and observe whatever the scribes and the Pharisees speak, that is, all they teach that is in accordance with the law.

Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, in [*Tyndale Bible Dictionary*](#), Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 917.

B. Based on the Teaching Authority of Moses (A short section from an Addendum in my book Upon this Rock)

"Now that we have analyzed the royal aspect of Israel and Judah, is there anything to be discovered from the priestly and scribal side of Jewish society that can shed light on the issue of succession? Let us again look back to the Pentateuch, this time at

Moses. “On the morrow Moses *sat* to judge the people, and the people *stood* about Moses from morning till evening. ... And Moses said to his father-in-law, ‘Because the people come to me to inquire of God; when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the statutes of God and his decisions” (Ex 18:13, 15–16; emphasis added). Moses was the official teacher of Israel—the lawgiver, interpreter, and judge. Like Peter, Moses also had a direct revelation from God while standing at a huge rock, Mount Sinai.

"Moses was infallible in his teaching and judgments. He sat from morning until night, judging the people and interpreting the law of God. His teaching authority (symbolized by the “seat of Moses”) continued through the centuries, through succession, and was still prominent in the synagogues almost two thousand years later. This is prominently mentioned in the Gospels. Matthew tells us, “Then said Jesus to the crowds and to his disciples, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you’ ” (Mt 23:1–3). Moses sat in his seat, and in Jesus’ time the scribes and Pharisees continue to sit in Moses’ seat (see above, pp. 46–47, n. 61).

"Exegetical scholar of the New Testament Floyd V. Filson, informs us, “The scribes, mostly Pharisees, copied, taught, and applied the Mosaic Law. They were pledged to obey and teach both the written law and the oral tradition, which they claimed was an integral part of the Law, *received through a direct succession of teachers going back to Moses...* Moses’ seat [was a] synagogue chair which symbolized the origin and authority of their teaching. Jesus does not challenge their claim; he seems here to approve it.”

"St. Macarius of Egypt (c a.d. 300–c. 390) saw the same connection. He wrote, “For of old Moses and Aaron, when this priesthood was theirs, suffered much; and Caiphas, when he had their chair, persecuted and condemned the Lord.... Afterwards

Moses was succeeded by Peter, who had committed to his hands the new Church of Christ, and the true priesthood.”

"The continuity between the Jews of the Old Testament and the Christians of the New Testament is quite pronounced, but it is certainly what we should expect if the covenants and revelation of God have one source and purpose. Moses and Peter both had revelations, and God appointed both to “seats” of authority. Both spoke God’s inspired words. Moses and Peter each had a “seat” (*kathedra*, in the Greek). Both Old and New Testament communities held to two aspects of one revelation: Scripture and tradition. Neither had the truncated concept of *sola Scriptura*. Both Israel and the Church had a recognized teaching authority; both believed God’s people were governed by a hierarchy.

"Both had a hierarchy before they had a “book”, and both “books” (Old and New Testaments) were recognized and collected into authoritative canons through the hands of the respective hierarchies. Both viewed the authoritative teaching office as being one of succession, in other words, the offices would always be filled, never left vacant. “Moses’ seat” continued with successors through two thousand years, acknowledged by the Lord Jesus himself, and now the “chair of Peter” is approaching its two thousandth year, and the office has been filled by 264 Popes.

"The Semitic mind is far more sensitive to symbolism, metaphor, and analogies than our Western mind, so bent on logical connections and factual evidence. The Jewish mind during the time of Christ would clearly see the ample parallels. The Jews, Matthew’s intended audience, understood not only the successive nature of the royal steward’s office but also the successive nature of the teaching authority of Moses. Can it be doubted that they applied this understanding, which was a part of their very cultural and religious fabric of life, to Peter’s appointment as the “rock” and the steward with the keys? As an Evangelical, I would have contended that Jesus was the King and had sent his Spirit—the Church needs no vizier. If that were the

case, I had to ask myself, why did Jesus appoint one? Did Christ the King need a royal steward only during Peter's lifetime, only until a.d. 67? Did the kingdom end and therefore no longer need the vizier? Did the office of royal steward lie vacant after Peter with the keys put in cold storage? In the Eastern kingdoms, the larger the kingdom became, the more necessary the steward became, not the other way around.

"Through Semitic eyes, and Semitic history, we see the succession of judicial and teaching authority pass through the various offices of Jewish life (monarchy and priesthood) right into the Church and through the centuries into our very lives. The Catholic Church stands in unquestioned continuity with the visible covenant people of God, people with a recognizable hierarchy, people with a heritage of judicial and teaching authority."

Stephen K. Ray, [*Upon This Rock: St. Peter and the Primacy of Rome in Scripture and the Early Church*](#), Modern Apologetics Library (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 292–294.

A footnote from my book specifically dealing with the chair of Moses:

"Within the Jewish synagogues a stone chair was reserved for the authoritative teacher and expositor of the law of Moses. Alfred Edersheim tells us, "In the middle of the synagogue (so generally) is the *Bima*, or elevation, on which there is the *Luach*, or desk, from which the Law is read. This is also called the *Kurseya*, chair, or throne, or *Kissé*, and *Pergulah*. Those who are to read the Law will stand, while he who is to preach or deliver an address will sit" (Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1:436). I studied one such chair in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem—an authentic stone chair from the first or second century.

"The placard describes the synagogue in Chorazin and comments on the chair: "Remarkable example of 'Galilean' type of

synagogue. This important wall had two raised daises. One was for the placement of the Holy Ark, the second with its imposing chair, 'the seat of Moses', from where the Bible was read." Interestingly, the "seat of Moses" is not formally decreed in the Old Testament, but Jesus nevertheless recognizes it as an authentic development of the Jewish oral tradition. James White tries to dismiss the importance of such a chair with the comment: "Synagogue worship, of course, came into being long after Moses' day, so those who attempt to make this an oral tradition going back to Moses are engaging in wishful thinking" (*The Roman Catholic Controversy*, 100).

"Frankly, I do not recall any "Roman apologists" who claim that synagogue worship or the actual stone chair goes back to Moses. Rather, Moses' authority as the teacher of Israel was understood to be successive and was represented in the time of Jesus by the "seat of Moses" in the synagogue. The tradition of Moses' teaching authority—embodied in the "seat of Moses"—is based on Exodus 18:13, 15–16: "On the morrow Moses sat to judge the people [NIV: "Moses took his seat"], and the people stood about Moses from morning till evening.... And Moses said to his father-in-law, 'Because the people come to me to inquire of God; when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the statutes of God and his decisions.' " Does Jesus deride the tradition and the teaching authority of Moses and his successors?

"No; in fact, he commands the listeners to obey those who teach and judge from the seat of Moses—Do what they say, not what they do. The Greek word Matthew used for seat is *kathedra* (καθέδρα), from which comes the Latin phrase *ex cathedra* (from the chair) and the word *cathedral*, which means the "church containing the throne of the bishop".

"Eusebius writes, "The chair of James, who first received the episcopate of the church at Jerusalem from the Saviour himself, ... has been preserved until now, the brethren who have followed

him in succession there exhibiting clearly to all the reverence which both those of old times and those of our own day maintained and do maintain for holy men on account of their piety” (Eusebius, *Church History*, 7, 19, finished in a.d. 325, in NPNF2, 1:305)."