

3. Jesus and the Apostles' View of the Bible (2Q 2020—How to Interpret Scripture)

Biblical Material: Matt. 4:1–11; Matt. 22:37–40; Luke 24:13–35, 44, 45; Luke 4:25–27; Acts 4:24–26.

Quotes

- Christ is the Word of God. It is not in certain texts written in the New Testament, valuable as they are; it is not in certain words which Jesus spoke, vast as is their preciousness; it is in the Word, which Jesus is, that the great manifestation of God is made. *Phillips Brooks*
- If we read the Bible asking first, 'What would Jesus do?' instead of asking 'What has Jesus done,' we'll miss the good news that alone can set us free. *Tullian Tchividjian*
- If you want to understand Jesus, you have to study the whole Bible. Christian duty is not defined solely by the words in red. *Randall Terry*
- Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ. *Jerome*
- Jesus saw himself as the key to Scripture and it as the key to himself. *J.I. Packer*
- Because the apostles believed this [The Old Testament], they put their opinions aside in light of what the Word said. They devoted themselves to the Scriptures—studying it, memorizing it, living by it. *J.D. Greear*

Questions

Why are Jesus' comments on the Old Testament so significant? What lessons are there here in the way we are to approach the Old Testament? How did the apostles use the Scriptures that were available to them? Why is it important to see the continuity between the Old and New Testaments? How should we approach the whole Bible in the context of God's character?

Bible summary

Jesus used Scripture to defend himself during the Temptations (Matt. 4:1–11). Jesus quoted the Old Testament to show that the Law was based on love (Matt. 22:37–40). Instead of announcing his return to his disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus showed them how Scripture pointed to himself (Luke 24:13–35, 44, 45). Jesus pointed back to the work of Elijah and Elisha as prophets of God (Luke 4:25–27). The Christian believers used a Psalm as the basis for their prayer (Acts 4:24–26).

Comment

The most telling argument for the Old Testament is the way it's used in the New Testament. Jesus appealed to its truths and the apostles wrote of the fulfillment of prophecy. Without the Old Testament much of the New Testament would be hard to understand, especially when it comes to signs of symbol used in books like Revelation. While some dismiss the OT as irrelevant to their Christian experience, there's much there that is profitable. Yes there may be some parts that are less relevant today, and the picture of God hardly is the full revelation as shown by Jesus, there are great examples of trust in a loving God. And who cannot be moved by God's agonizing over his people like a loving father as described by Hosea.

The best example from the life of Jesus is how he responded to Satan's temptations in the desert. By appealing to these previous statements he showed how much he valued the Scriptures he had learned as a boy. They gave him great support as he refused to give in to the Devil,

demonstrating reliance on God's word that should be an example to us. Jesus also referenced stories like Naaman and the widow of Zarephath. Nor should we miss his endorsement of the Creation account, pointing out when asked about divorce that "it was not like this at the beginning." Jesus also used Scripture to point to his coming death, recognizing that it had to be—unlike his disciples who seem to have been blind to what was coming.

However it was on the road to Emmaus that Jesus showed how important Scripture was to him, giving us a great lesson in how to conduct a Bible study! He could have easily overwhelmed those two disciples by demonstrating who he was. But he wanted them to understand that it was all predicted in Scripture. "Starting with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them everything that was said in Scripture about himself." Luke 24:27 FBV. The result? "The two disciples said to each other, 'Weren't our thoughts on fire when he spoke to us, as he explained the Scriptures to us?'" Luke 24:32 FBV.

The apostles used Scripture in many ways. (Interestingly they often quoted the Septuagint, the Greek translation produced some 200 years previously. This is the reason for a few differences from the Masoretic Hebrew text we have today). They frequently cited the OT to prove how Jesus fulfilled prophecy. However, they also recognized that times had changed and in their interpretation often changed literal Israel into spiritual Israel. In Acts 15 while respecting the Mosaic law they reduced the requirements for the Gentiles to just four. This shows an ongoing, developing understanding of inspiration and application. Paul does this in Romans, using many OT texts and showing how they now applied. The same is true in Hebrews—a book for Jesus showing how Jesus and Christianity was development of the OT beliefs and practices.

What is clear from Jesus and the apostles is the conviction that Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is this belief that links it all together, providing foundational principles that are eternally valid. Only as we read the Bible in the same way will it be true for us today.

Ellen White comments

The Old Testament Scriptures stated plainly every detail of Christ's ministry, and again and again He quoted from the prophets, and declared, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." If they had honestly searched the Scriptures, bringing their theories to the test of God's word, Jesus need not have wept over their impenitence. He need not have declared, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Luke 13:35. They might have been acquainted with the evidence of His Messiahship, and the calamity that laid their proud city in ruins might have been averted. {DA 241 }

The Old Testament was all the Scripture then in existence; but it was not written merely for the ancients; it was for all ages and for all people. Jesus would have the teachers of His doctrine diligently search the Old Testament for that light which establishes His identity as the Messiah foretold in prophecy, and reveals the nature of His mission to the world. The Old and the New Testament are inseparable, for both are the teachings of Christ. The doctrine of the Jews, who accept only the Old Testament, is not unto salvation, since they reject the Saviour whose life and ministry was a fulfillment of the law and the prophecies. And the doctrine of those who discard the Old Testament is not unto salvation, because it rejects that which is direct testimony of Christ. Skeptics begin with discounting upon the Old Testament, and it takes but another step to deny the validity of the New, and thus both are rejected. {5BC 1094 }

Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, "and preached unto him Jesus." There is a class who are reading the Scriptures, and cannot understand their import. Those who have a knowledge of God are needed to explain his word to these souls. {PH154 61 }