

The Bible According to Jesus

Jesus often quoted verses from the Old Testament. Since He is the Living Word, and because He understands the full extent of meaning in every passage, we should look to Jesus' interpretive methods. By observing the way He uses Scripture we can see how we should use Scripture. By observing His interpretive methods we can learn (by the Spirit) to see the Word and its application as He saw it. We'll look at one verse at a time and see how the Lord applied each verse.

In Matthew, Jesus begins to quote Scripture as He resists the Evil One. Satan told Jesus that if He was the Son of God He should command the stones to turn into bread. Matt 4:4 (NIV)⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

The whole passage from which Jesus quoted is this: Deut 8:3-5 (NIV)³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.⁴ Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.⁵ Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

How does that apply to this temptation? The temptation is to take into your hands the power of God to meet your current need. But what were the Israelites learning? Humility! They were learning dependence upon God. They were learning that the LORD was their provider. It is not so much a verse about reading the Bible as it is our dependence upon God's provision in God's time and God's way.

When we quote Jesus saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD", we often would emphasize listening to God is more important than food. To read the Word is as important as physical nourishment. That is true, but Jesus had the idea of the whole passage in mind. In other words, I will not take matters into my own hands but be dependent on what God speaks into my life. If I was to invent an escape I might be trying to get out of the instructional discipline of God. I could make a loaf of bread, but God will provide in God's way and time. I am humbly dependent upon the Father.

How many times a day do you try to make a loaf of bread out of a stone? The situation is impossible, but you try to make it happen. Instead of waiting on God you start commanding rocks to turn into bread. They might become bread, but you missed the lesson God had for you. You tried to get out of your position as child. God is our Father, let Him provide. Humble yourself and wait on Him.

Jesus had taken this passage from Deuteronomy and made it a very personal and practical guide for His life as a man. Trust the Father, don't force things to

happen to get your way when you want it. We need that same kind of practical application when we read Scripture.

The next quote is in answer to Satan's second temptation. Matt 4:7 (NIV)
Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Satan took Jesus to the highest point on the temple. He threw Scripture back at the LORD. The Word promised that the angels would not let Him dash his foot on a stone. So Satan says again, "If you are the Son of God..." Show everyone. This time Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16.

The context is that of the Children of Israel grumbling because they did not have something they thought they needed. They wanted water. The passage says that they were quarrelling with God, and putting Him to the test. God gives us tests, but man is not of the caliber to give God a test. That would be the height of presumption. They did anyway. They insisted on water right now. God tells Moses what to do. He obeys and water comes from the rock. Later Moses reminds them that they are not to do that. You don't take a test from God and throw it back in His face.

Isn't that exactly what Jesus was telling Satan? Satan was tempting Jesus, and this was allowed by the Sovereign God. In that sense it was a test from God. But to respond by demanding God perform for you would be to give the test back to God. God would supply the water, if the people would turn to Him and ask reverently for their need to be met. Instead they made demands of God. "If you are really here leading us, then give us water." Jesus was being told, "If you really are the Son of God, then God will have the angels deliver you."

What can we learn from Jesus use of this Old Testament verse? First, it fit perfectly the situation He was in. We can come up with Scriptural responses, but is it applicable? Is it a fair analogy? Does the same situation fit? In this passage it certainly did. Jesus uses analogous situations to apply the stories of the Bible to His own life. The wanderers wanted water. Jesus wanted to be recognized so they would come to Him for life. To jump would have been a demand that God perform at Jesus choice of timing. To resist the temptation would be to place the proof in the hands of God. God knew the best way and the best time to prove to the world who He was, was the day of resurrection.

Are we familiar with the stories and there accompanying warnings or lessons so that we can apply them to our situation? Are we ready to make the analogies? Do we even consider the application of Bible stories when we are faced with temptation? If Jesus used this as a tool we should also. This use of Scripture should encourage us to apply passages in the same way. You will notice Jesus only quoted the warning part of this story. That is the way we should memorize also. The warning portion should bring back the whole story to us.

Satan offers the biggest piece of bait he has to offer, the kingdoms of this world. Now he reveals what he is really after, worship. He tells Christ that if He will just bow down and worship him, then He can have the kingdoms of man. Jesus quotes again from Deut. 6, this time from verse 13. Matt 4:10 (NIV)¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Again, Jesus realized what was behind the temptation. The passage in Deuteronomy was about worshipping false gods. To bow before him would be to worship a false God. Then you would have had the Son of the Most High worshipping Satan for the temporal saving of mankind. Certainly Jesus could have brought an end to pain and hunger and death of a physical nature, but He is after something greater – spiritual life! Jesus now rebukes Satan, telling him to leave. Satan will never get what he is after from Jesus.

Again the analogy is perfect and the situation the same. This was the temptation to worship a god for gain. All idol worship is for our own gain. Jesus did not run after power. He followed the clear mandate in Scripture. In this case the application was very obvious. The command is easy to apply to the present circumstance. Some verses just speak directly to your temptation. This was a command of God. Jesus memorized the direct commands and was quick to see the request of Satan went contrary to that command.

We need to pay special attention to the commands in Scripture. Name a few. How do they apply to your temptations? Are you applying them as Jesus did?

From these three passages we see Jesus used the passages in context. He applied the lesson from the story to his own life. In the first passage we saw His willingness to trust in God's way and God's time instead of taking matters into His own hands.

In the second passage we learn to use applicable portions of Scripture. Look for applications to your own situation. We are not to make demands of God. If we are under a test, submission is the best response. Don't look for shortcuts to get out from under God's hand.

In the last passage we learn that some applications are obvious and straightforward. We may be tempted to do what we know is wrong for results that would be temporarily beneficial to many. God is after spiritual life. We should not compromise to reach that goal. Obey what we know!

What have you learned from Jesus use of these passages?

How can you apply that to your own usage of Scripture?

Do you need to be more familiar with the Word to be more like Jesus?

How can you head toward that goal?