

The Bible According to Jesus part 4

We have been going through the Gospel of Matthew to see how Jesus interpreted and applied Scripture. We saw how He answered Satan with Scripture. In doing so, He used applicable stories and key lessons to clarify what was true. We saw in the Sermon on the Mount how he corrected many misunderstandings and misuses of Scripture by getting to the Spirit behind the letter. At times He interpreted Scripture in an even more confining way because of the constraints the Spirit would place on a person in the Kingdom.

The next quote from the Old Testament in the Gospel of Matthew is found in Matt 11:7-10 (NIV)⁷ *As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind?⁸ If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces.⁹ Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."*

John's disciples had just come to ask Jesus if He was the One. As they left Jesus explained to the crowds that John was the one Malachi predicted in Malachi 3:1. The rest of that verse says, *"Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.*" If John understood who he was in prophecy then he should have had the confidence that Jesus was whom he declared him to be. In this case Jesus used Scripture to verify who He was. It answered the question of the disciples of John and probably of many in the crowd. From this we can learn that Jesus used Scripture to answer questions. It helped the crowd understand what was being fulfilled prophetically.

Some one might ask you, "Don't you think the world is going to get better and better?" I can answer them from the prophetic word of Paul to Timothy, ¹² *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,* ¹³ *while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.* 2 Tim 3:12-13 (NIV) Or from the lips of Jesus in Matthew 24:6-13.

We can use the application of Scripture to clarify our times also. Be careful to know the Word so that you do not misuse this method. Many have taken a specific prediction and misapplied it to their time. Jesus application was accurate and proved true as time passed.

In the next passage in which Jesus quotes Scripture He is teaching a hard lesson. Matt 12:1-8 (NIV)¹ *At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them.² When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."³ He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?⁴ He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread--which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests.⁵ Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent?⁶ I tell you that one greater than the temple is here⁷ If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.⁸ For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."*

The Pharisees had their simple clear-cut rules for what was right and wrong. You can't work on the Sabbath. They made the definition of work as confining as they possibly could. Jesus had a few Old Testament illustrations that showed that they had gone overboard in their restrictions. One was the story of David. When man is hungry and in need there is flexibility in the rules. The Shewbread was only to be eaten by priests. David was the servant of God but he was not a priest. Yet God seemed to allow this breaking of the command because of the present human need. The priests work in the Temple on the Sabbath and yet no one accuses them of breaking the Sabbath. The issue is taking a day to worship God, not what is or is not allowed. The rules around the Sabbath were to encourage a day of worship. As the disciples were walking with their Master they were listening to the Word of God as He instructed them. Could there be any better worship? So they were keeping the intent of all the Sabbath rules.

Then Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6. God desires mercy not sacrifice. He tells them they do not understand that or they would not condemn the innocent. Human need was not to be set aside because of Sabbath laws. That would be sacrifice. Our worship of God should make us more merciful toward one another not demanding of sacrificial behavior. In this application Jesus exposed the Pharisees misguided focus through the application of Scripture. We can be as hard as the Pharisees by refusing to recognize human need while we demand conformity to traditions. God desires mercy. This week we are presented with a need in the community. The person doesn't attend our church. Can we help just because there is a legitimate human need or will we demand sacrifice of attending our service first? What would Jesus do?

Jesus next quote is to help the disciples understand the answer to their question. They wondered why Jesus used parables so often. Matt 13:10-15 (NIV)¹⁰ *The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"*¹¹ *He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them."*¹² *Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.*¹³ *This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand."*¹⁴ *In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."*¹⁵ *For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'*

Jesus was quoting Isaiah 6:9,10. Jesus quoted Scripture to answer questions. How often do we answer a question with Scripture? If we want to give a wise answer that has eternal weight we should follow His example. Of course we have to know the Word and be able to quickly look it up or quote it to use it like that. Jesus was aware that He was a living fulfillment of this passage. When we consciously walk according to the Word, we can give an answer to anyone who questions our behavior.