

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES

(Taken and adapted from 'The Red Bits – A Study Guide' by Michael Button)

INTRODUCTION

We shall now turn to see what Jesus told us about the Scriptures. In His day these were limited to what we now know as the Old Testament, for of course the New Testament had yet to be written. We shall see that, far from being outmoded by the New Testament, the Old Testament formed a solid and reliable record on which to base one's faith and obedience.

A. THE SCRIPTURES – WHAT ARE THEY?

The New Testament word for 'Scripture' is *graphé*, which simply means 'something written.' However, in its context 'scriptures' refers to sacred writings which are the written record of what God has said and done, and has inspired to be recorded for posterity. In the time of Jesus 'scriptures' referred to the Hebrew Bible, which is what we know today as the *Old Testament*.^{*} The New Testament had yet to be written. There were other writings circulating among the Jews, most of which were written between the Testaments, but they were not recognised as being inspired by God.

Jesus frequently quoted from the Scriptures, often referring to passages that prophesied of Him and of His ministry. He quoted from 19 books and mentioned 20 characters.

B. JESUS' TEACHING AND USE OF THE SCRIPTURES

1. **They carry divine authority.** Jesus often prefaced His quotes with "*It is written,*" or "*Have you not heard?*" implying that these words are authoritative and not subject to discussion. He confirmed the inspiration of Scripture when He attributed a Psalm written by David to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (*read* Psalm 110:1 and Mark 12:36).

2. **They are reliable.** Jesus made no mention of any part of Scripture containing errors or inaccuracies but He came down strongly on those who were stubbornly inaccurate in their interpretation of it (*read* Matt 23:23 with Deut 14:22). There have been, and still are, many critics of the Scriptures who consider them inaccurate, but invariably it is the critics' interpretations that are subject to question and not the Scriptures themselves.

3. **The Scriptures speak of Him** (what the risen Jesus taught the two travellers on the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24:27). References to Jesus – the Messiah – can be found throughout the Old Testament by those who have the discernment to spot them. Remember the old poem concerning Jesus in the Scriptures which we

^{*} The Hebrew Bible contained the same Books as our Old Testament but they were in a different order.

quoted in Study SS002-3: "The New is in the Old concealed: the Old is in the New revealed."

4. **They cannot be broken and will be fulfilled** (read John 10:35, Luke 18:31 and Luke 24:44). In the third part of these passages, Jesus referred to the titles of the three sections into which the Hebrew Bible was divided: Moses, the Prophets and Psalms, thus indicating that all the genre of the Scriptures contained references to Him that would be fulfilled:

- (i) Moses (i.e. the Law) was being fulfilled in the perfect obedience of Jesus.¹
- (ii) Prophets spoke of events before Jesus came, of Jesus Himself and of events to come in the last days. Most prophecies concerning the Nation of Israel and the Messiah have already been fulfilled. Those concerning the last days will not fail to be fulfilled because the coming and victory of Jesus ensure the culmination of events as planned and prophesied.
- (iii) Psalms. This section was also known as *writings* and covered a variety of books which did not fit neatly into the other two categories. Various prophecies of the Messiah and of the last days are to be found within them (especially in Psalms and Daniel). Again, these find their fulfilment either in or because of Jesus.

5. **They are to be obeyed.** Since the Scriptures are the written record of what God has said and has inspired to be written down, they can properly be referred to as *The Word of God*. Thus, when Jesus said to the devil, quoting Deut 8:3, "*It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'*"² He was virtually saying that we must live by obedience to the Scriptures just as much as we live by the food we eat.

6. **Jesus used the Scriptures in Spiritual Warfare.** The fact that Jesus told of His temptation experiences in the wilderness (how else would the Gospel writers have known?) must mean He intends us to learn from them. One of the main lessons we can learn is that we can use the Scriptures to counter temptation and spiritual attacks, holding resolutely to God's commandments and promises as we read them in our Bibles.

7. **Jesus expanded the Scriptures in His ministry and through His words** (read John 15:15 and John 17:8,14). He spoke of passing on words from His Father. Those words were recorded by the Apostles and directly (by Matthew and John) or indirectly (by Mark and Luke) passed on in their writings. These, together with other writings inspired by the Holy Spirit, gave us the New Testament Scriptures.

¹ For an explanation of *jot* and *tittle* see Study 5, Section C.

² Luke 4:4.

Activity 1: Jesus said that the Scriptures testify of Him (*read* John 5:39). Read the following Old Testament Scriptures and find the closest match with those about Jesus in the New Testament.

(a) Ps 2:7	_____	1	Luke 4:18-21
(b) Psalm 16:10	_____	2	Mark 6:3
(c) Isaiah 53:3	_____	3	Matt 3:17
(d) Isaiah 61:1	_____	4	Matt 24:30
(e) Daniel 7:13	_____	5	Mark 16:6

D. PERSONAL APPLICATION

What improvements can you make in these three areas – Faith, Prayer and the reading of Scripture? It may not be possible to ‘work up’ faith by mental effort, but perhaps we can increase our faith by more diligent prayer, the reading of Scripture and obedience to Scripture. Try it!

Activity 2: For discussion or personal meditation – In this and the previous two Studies we have covered Faith, Prayer and the Scriptures. In what way are all three related?