

What Jesus Believed About the Bible

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[0 : 0 0] Well, back in the beginning of October, so now a couple months in, we have been studying the doctrine of the Word, what the Bible teaches about the Bible.

And today is our seventh session, and we're going to do something different. We're not looking at another attribute, because we have looked at all of the ones that you would commonly consider attributes of Scripture.

So this morning, as I said, we're going to look at what Jesus believed about the Bible, what he said during his earthly ministry about the Bible. So Kevin DeYoung, he wrote a book called Taking God at His Word, and as I've tried to say each week, that book serves as our guide for this study.

And this is how DeYoung introduces this singular question that we want to answer. It is a simple question, and a crucial question, one that must undeniably shape and set the agenda for our doctrine of Scripture.

The question is, what did Jesus believe about the Bible? So why is this question so important? Why do we care so deeply to know what Jesus believed about the Bible?

[1 : 1 3] Because if we are Christians, then we obviously follow the teaching of Christ. We should believe what Jesus believed. We should listen to what he taught.

We should obey what he commands. So whatever he taught in his earthly ministry about the Bible, whatever he believed about the Bible, if we are Christians, we should believe that too.

We should embrace the very same view of the Scriptures that our Savior held. So as we dive into this study this morning, we are operating under an assumption.

And this is an assumption that we covered in our first Sunday school on this, but we want to kind of go back and circle back on that this morning. We're operating under the assumption that the words of Jesus, which we have recorded in our Bible, they are accurate, they are true, they are reliable.

There are many who reject the Bible. There are many who say, it's not reliable, it's not accurate, it's not true. They would say that we can't trust what is written in it.

[2 : 1 9] They would say that we can't know that the record we have of Jesus' words is actually what he said. So if we can't know that, then we can't really know what he believed about the Bible.

We can make educated guesses, they would say, but we can't know for sure what Jesus believed. Now again, this is something we addressed in our first lesson together, so let's do a little review.

We're just going to reiterate that this isn't meant to be a study on apologetics. Our goal isn't to try to prove the reliability and the trustworthiness of the Bible. We aren't going to dive into manuscript evidence as good and convincing and helpful to the believer especially as that is, to reassure us and remind us, yes, the Bible is true.

We are going to operate under this assumption that the Scriptures are trustworthy because they say that they are. And the Spirit, by God's grace, has opened our eyes to believe that the Word is reliable and trustworthy and true.

So whatever we read in our Bibles, we are confidently trusting it to be accurate and reliable. Whatever Jesus said and he taught in his earthly ministry, we are confidently trusting that we have access here to exactly what God wanted us to have access to.

[3 : 38] Remember the sufficiency of Scripture. Remember the necessity of Scripture. So we have no more than we need. We have no less than we need. We have the floor. We have the ceiling.

God has given us what we need of what Jesus said to have confidence and to understand what Jesus believed about the Bible. So what did he believe?

Jesus had much to say in the Gospel accounts. Of course, Jesus didn't have the Bible as we have it today. He didn't have a bound copy as we have of the complete canon of Scripture.

He had the Old Testament. And he didn't have it as a copy on his bedside table. But he had access to the Old Testament Scriptures. He had access to them in the synagogues. He had access to them in the temple.

It wasn't a book. It was a collection of scrolls. And these scrolls were at the center of Jewish religious life in his time. So they would be regularly taught.

[4 : 38] They would be regularly read. Jesus, in fact, stood up and read from Isaiah. And then he taught on Isaiah. And we even know that Jesus in his childhood sat under the teaching of the Word in the temple when he was a boy.

Luke 2. His parents can't find him. He has gone missing. Every parent's nightmare. And where do they find him? Sitting among the teachers. And this is what Luke 2 says.

Listening to them and asking them questions. Then Luke 2 goes on to say that Jesus grew, among many things, in wisdom. Wisdom regarding, especially, the Word.

So like all faithful Jews of his time, Jesus had an understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures. And he was well versed in them. He knew his Bible.

So what did Jesus believe about the Bible? Well, he believed that it was authoritative. How do we know that Jesus believed it was authoritative? Because time and again, all through the Gospel accounts, he used the Old Testament Scriptures to prove his point.

[5 : 47] He used the Old Testament Scriptures to back up his claim. He used the Old Testament Scriptures to shoot down the teachings of the religious leaders and all that was false. He would put them to shame.

He would silence them by simply quoting Scripture to them. He wielded no weapon more powerful than the very Word of God. And it wasn't like Jesus only quoted famous, well-known passages.

He did that. We're going to look at one this morning. But he also quoted, or he also referred to, less well-known, what we might call more obscure passages of Scripture.

In John 10.35, Jesus made a very significant claim. He revealed in clear terms his belief about the Bible. This is what he said in John 10.35.

He said, The Scripture cannot be broken. Broken. Meaning that the Scripture can't be refuted or set aside.

[6 : 48] It can't be proven false. And what Scripture was he talking about in that particular passage? He wasn't talking about a well-known passage in the Torah. He didn't go to Isaiah, somewhere that maybe you would expect him to go.

He went to a very lesser-known psalm. And then he picked from that psalm one word to back up his point. He needed just one word from Scripture to put the religious leaders in their place.

And he operated under the assumption, even if the religious leaders misinterpreted the Bible, even if they twisted it to their own purposes, they had to recognize for the sake of others it was authoritative.

So when he pointed to that one word, their mouths were shut. They could not give a response. One word from an obscure psalm to prove his point. That's how authoritative Jesus believed the Bible to be.

So he didn't pick and choose what to believe and hold fast to. All of it carried weight. And he was well-versed in all of it. He didn't just know particular passages and say, here, let's look at this one again.

[8 : 00] He would go to all different passages in Scripture because all of it was authoritative. So now let's look at three different primary passages that help us to understand what Jesus believed about the Bible.

And all three of these passages are in the Gospel according to Matthew. So turn with me, if you have a copy of the Scriptures, to Matthew chapter 5. Matthew 5.

And we're going to begin reading in verse 17. Matthew 5. And we'll begin in verse 17.

And this is Jesus speaking here. Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

[9 : 15] But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. So this passage makes the same basic point that John 10.35 did, and then it expands on that point.

But you actually see there where Jesus says, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments, that word translated in the ESV as relax is the same word in John 10 translated as broken.

So the same point here that the Scriptures can't be abrogated. They can't be proven false. They can't be set aside, discarded, and done with. You can't relax the commandments.

You can either relax the commandments, or you do the commandments. You hold to the commandments. And Jesus is clearly saying that you ought to do them.

You can't get rid of any of it. To what degree? Down to an iota. Down to a dot. An iota was the smallest of the Greek letters in the Greek alphabet.

[10 : 20] And a dot, I'm sorry, a dot was, an iota was that, and a dot was the very small marking used in Hebrew for vowels, for pointing of letters.

And so you had Jesus speaking to Greek, Hebrew, all that is written, and he is saying, you can't take away even that. It's a little bit like the English language concept of crossing your T's, dotting your I's.

He's saying you can't take away a single cross of a T, or a single dot of an I. And, he is saying that this is the written word.

He's not just saying anything that you might come across, he's saying, in particular here, the written word you can't do away with. Christ has not come to abolish it, not to set it aside, but to fulfill it.

Now, Kevin DeYoung raises a possible objection at this point. He says, but doesn't Jesus sometimes argue that the Old Testament was wrong? Doesn't he actually correct the scriptures on a few occasions?

[11 : 27] And then the immediate example that may come to mind is the very following passage in Matthew 5. What does Jesus say, beginning in verse 21? He says, you have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. So it could seem that Jesus is saying, here's this old teaching.

You can find this old teaching in Exodus 20. You can find it again in Deuteronomy 5. That teaching was wrong, and it seems that he's saying it's wrong, and now let me teach you what's right.

Or at least he's saying, let me improve upon that old teaching. But Jesus is not setting aside this Old Testament law. He's explaining the spirit of the law.

Because people in his day were forgetting the spirit of the law, just like we can forget the spirit of the law today. DeYoung explains this saying, Jesus does not want to correct scripture.

[12 : 30] He wants to bring its full weight to bear on the human heart. He does not want the word of God circumvented by human tradition or specious reasoning. Instead, every speck of scripture must be applied to every speck of Christian discipleship.

Jesus wants more of scripture in our lives, not less. Now there are also times, as we consider Jesus saying, I'm not here to abolish the scriptures, but to fulfill it.

There are also times in the gospel accounts where Jesus shoots down the Pharisees' misinterpretation of the Old Testament. It's not that the Old Testament was wrong or the teaching found in it, but the Pharisees were misinterpreting it.

Or the Pharisees were lowering the bar. You remember the illustration in the sermon series where we looked at the Pharisees. They were setting the bar low like a hurdler, like one who was trying to jump over it.

And they would set it lower to make it easier. There were some laws that they were obeying, but then there were other laws that they were choosing to ignore and to therefore disobey.

[13 : 41] Matthew 23, 23, 23 is a good example. There we read Jesus saying, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness. So Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for neglecting the big stuff like justice and mercy and faithfulness.

But he doesn't tell them to forget about tithing. He doesn't say, you know, these you ought to have done, but now you can forget about doing them.

No, he says, these you ought to have done, and now you need to do the others as well. Don't neglect to do the tithing. We see in this example that Jesus is often correcting.

But he's never correcting the Old Testament scriptures. He's correcting those who misinterpret or fail to obey the Old Testament scriptures. He's always holding up the law, and he's teaching people to obey it.

[14 : 47] Or, Jesus is demonstrating how he fulfills the law and how therefore our relationship to the law changes. He doesn't say that he's doing away with the law.

He doesn't say that the law was wrong or unnecessary. He isn't telling us that we need to rip out the Old Testament from our Bibles that's no longer useful to us. You shouldn't read the Old Testament.

You shouldn't have it preached. There are many people who say something to that effect today, or at least live as though we should tear out the Old Testament.

Jesus isn't one of those people. He isn't saying any of that. Now, should we understand our Old Testament in light of the New? Should we hold to a Christian view of the Old Testament?

Amen. Absolutely. But Jesus is showing us here how he uniquely fulfills the Old Testament, and therefore, we live in relationship to certain laws differently now.

[15 : 47] This is true of ceremonial laws. Those laws served a good, necessary purpose prior to the coming of Christ. But with his coming, those laws are fulfilled, and our relationship to them changes.

For example, food laws. In Mark 7, 19, Jesus declared all foods clean. We could immediately think, Jesus just said something that goes against the Old Testament scriptures.

The Old Testament teaches that some foods are unclean. But again, Jesus isn't saying, forget that part of your Old Testament law, rip it out of your Bibles. He isn't setting it aside.

He fulfilled the ceremonial law. And so, our relationship to it changes. And additionally, in that account, in Mark 7, Jesus makes the point that sinful uncleanness originates from the heart.

It's what comes out of our mouths that makes us unclean. And for that, we need a Savior who perfectly obeyed the entire law, who fulfilled it fully and finally in his sacrificial death.

[16 : 56] So, de Jong explains this in the context of Mark 7. And he says, Jesus never questions the divine origin of the cleanliness rituals or of the truthfulness of what such laws commanded.

He does, however, teach that as a deeper understanding of the command, they should come to Christ in obedience to find the cleansing and purity they need. Okay, all of that related back to Matthew 5.

Jesus didn't come to abolish the law. He came to fulfill it. That's the first thing we see in what he believed about the scriptures. They're authoritative. They're not to be set aside. Let's look at the second passage.

And that's found in Matthew chapter 12. Matthew 12, and we're going to look at verses 38 to 42. Beginning in verse 38, Matthew 12.

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you. But he answered them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

[18 : 14] For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah.

And behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the south will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

And behold, something greater than Solomon is here. So the point that we want to see from this passage, very simple, very straightforward. Jesus teaches using biblical stories from the Old Testament.

And he teaches as though they are historical fact. He teaches as though they actually happened. These people lived. These events took place.

He doesn't treat them as myths or as fictional tales that were merely written to just help us along in our faith. They are a help to us. Paul says in Romans 15, 4, for whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

[19 : 30] So the stories of the Old Testament were written down to help us, but it's clear that Jesus believed them to be grounded in history, in fact. It's crucial to see that.

In this passage, for example, if Jonah was not a real person who actually went into the belly of the earth, then we have serious problems. If Jonah wasn't actually in the belly of the fish for three days, if he was just imaginary, then why should we have any confidence in the point that Jesus is making?

That he himself will go into the belly of the earth and be there three days and three nights, and then he is now going to rise again. What hope do we have in the resurrection if Jesus is basing the resurrection on an imaginary tale?

That would be weird. That would be hard to understand. If Jonah was an imaginary figure, then that kind of undercuts Jesus' argument.

It takes away the very physical, actual, historical nature of the resurrection. Same with the people that Jonah preached to. If the men of Nineveh were made up, then Jesus' teaching here it loses its punch.

[20 : 45] Why should the lost turn and repent at the prospect of imaginary people rising up at the judgment and condemning them? DeYoung uses an illustration that I really love because I love the Lord of the Rings.

Some of you know this. We've talked about it. And DeYoung says this. It's a fictional tale. And this is what he says about the Lord of the Rings. is that if Jonah wasn't real, if the men of Nineveh were not real, it would be like Jonah or someone saying to us, or it would be like Jesus or somebody saying to us, that orcs from Mordor are going to rise up at the judgment and they are going to condemn you.

And you'd be like, yeah, those aren't real. So I'm not all that concerned about these orcs of Mordor. It's that kind of a principle. If the men of Nineveh were not real, I don't really feel the weight of their rising up to condemn.

I'm going to be like, yeah, they're not going to be there because they're not real. I like how DeYoung quotes another theologian. His name is T.T. Perrone. And he asked this rhetorical question.

So there's some real force to it. And yet, we are to suppose him to say that imaginary persons who at the imaginary preaching of an imaginary prophet repented in imagination shall rise up in that day and condemn the actual impenitence of those his actual hearers.

[22 : 07] Do you see the force of that argument? Yeah, that's kind of silly. So clearly we see Jesus grounded the scriptures in historical reality. His understanding was grounded in historical reality.

Well, maybe we're thinking, okay, we're talking about one passage here. Is that really enough to say that Jesus believed in the historical reality of biblical stories? Let me give you a list from DeYoung's book.

All of the people and events that Jesus referenced from the Old Testament. Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sodom and Gomorrah, Isaac and Jacob, Manna in the wilderness, the serpent in the wilderness, Moses, David, Solomon, the queen of Sheba, Elijah and Elisha, the widow of Zarephath, Naaman, Zechariah, and Jonah.

So well-known people, well-known events, as well as far lesser-known people and events, all treated real. Now it's popular today to question the historicity of Christianity.

Even professing Christians do it. Adam, it is said, wasn't actually a historical figure. But if we believe that, we clearly don't believe the same thing that Jesus did about the Bible.

[23 : 28] Nowhere does he teach that the people and events that he makes reference to from the Old Testament are made up. In fact, often, like the passage we just looked at, the very point of the passage is dependent on the historicity of those people and those events.

Let's look at our third and final passage to see what Jesus believed about the Bible. Turn over from Matthew 12 to Matthew 19. Matthew 12 to Matthew 19.

In this passage, Jesus is teaching on divorce. So follow along as we read beginning in verse 4.

He answered, Have you not read? Real quick, we need to pause there. This is a little bit of review from a couple weeks ago, but we need to see this again. When we looked at some passages a few weeks ago, we saw in the clarity of Scripture that Jesus assumed the Scriptures to be understandable.

He never gave people an out for their disobedience. He never said anything like, Well, the Scriptures are hard to understand, so it makes sense that you've been disobeying God.

[24 : 46] It's a good thing that I'm here now. I can clear it up. I can help you. I can teach you. He never says that. Over and over again, He simply says things like what we see here in Matthew 19.

Have you not read? Have you not read in the law? Have you never read in the Scriptures? Have you not read what was said to you by God? Matthew 22, even more pointed, You are wrong because you neither know the Scriptures nor the power of God.

So Jesus was quick to question whether His listeners had actually read their Bibles, but He was never quick to question whether the Bible could be understood and therefore obeyed.

Okay, back to the passage at hand. Let's start over in verse 4. He answered, Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

So here's a well-known passage that Jesus is quoting from Genesis chapter 2 in the creation account. Now, how do these couple of verses teach us what Jesus believed about the Bible?

[26 : 02] Well, look at who Jesus attributes the words of verse 5 to. Okay, so Matthew 19, 5 is a quote of Genesis 2, 24. Genesis 2, 24 reads, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

Those words in Genesis 2 are attributed to no particular person. No person, no speaker is tied to those words.

They're just a part of the narrative. But then in Matthew 19, 5, who does Jesus attribute those words to? Who does He say said those words?

God. He who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said. The one who created them also said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

So Jesus attributes the words of Genesis 2, 24 to God Himself. Because for Jesus, what the Scriptures say, God says.

[27 : 14] If it's in the Bible, God said it. What did God do? He carried along the biblical authors so they wrote exactly what He intended for them to write. We see here, Jesus is upholding the inspiration of Scripture.

He's saying, God said it. It's there in the Bible, so God said it. Kevin DeYoung sums it up. For Jesus, Scripture is powerful, decisive, and authoritative because it is nothing less than the voice of God.

Okay, one last passage that we'll look at this morning, but it's not in Matthew. It's in Luke 24. So this is the last passage we'll look at, and it's in Luke 24. And this is the last thing we see that Jesus teaches us about what He believed about the Bible.

You may know where we're going with this. This is a pretty well-known text. This is after Jesus has risen from the dead, and yet He has not appeared to many, and so the word has not gotten out yet that the tomb is empty.

And in fact, these two disciples who are on the road to Emmaus, they're disheartened. They are sad because He died. The Savior that they had waited for had died.

[28 : 38] Let me open to it. So this is how Jesus addresses them. I'm sorry, and I'm wrong. The tomb is already known to be empty, but they don't have hope that He actually rose from the dead.

So this is what Jesus says beginning in verse 25. And He said to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.

So what does Jesus do here? What does He believe about the Bible? He believed that it all pointed ultimately to Him. He believed that the central focus of this true story, all that the Old Testament was looking forward to and anticipating in His arrival centered on Him.

Moses, the prophets, later in Luke 24, He even brings in the Psalms to say, the whole of the Old Testament points to me. Or as Jesus said in John 5, 46, if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for He wrote of me.

[30 : 02] So Jesus believes the Bible is ultimately about Him, His coming, and the implications for us. So in our study of the Word, we've covered a lot of ground.

We have seen how the scriptures are inspired, how they are inerrant, how they are sufficient, how they are clear, how they are necessary, how they are final. So let's circle back to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter.

What did Jesus believe about the Bible? And remember, this is important because if we are a Christian, we should believe the same thing that Jesus believed about the Bible.

We should have the same views on the Word as Him. Jesus believed the Bible was inspired, inerrant, sufficient, clear, necessary, and final.

So we do well to believe the very same things that Jesus believed. and we do well to treat the Bible the very same way that Jesus treated the Bible.

[31 : 07] Remember the words that He spoke to Satan during the temptation in the wilderness. We've looked at these, but they come back to have significance this morning. What did Jesus say to Satan when He was tempted?

Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. And that itself was a quote from Deuteronomy. Jesus was using a word from the mouth of God, a word that He depended on, to rebuke the devil.

What Jesus believed about the Bible, He actually lived. So do we do the same? Do we have a high view of the Word like Jesus? And then, do we live according to that view?

Do we read the Bible? Do we memorize the Bible? Do we meditate on the Bible? Do we obey the Bible? Jesus did. He did those very things.

What He believed about the Bible, He lived out. I'll close with this quote from Kevin DeYoung. Jesus submitted His will to the Scriptures, committed His brain to studying the Scriptures, and humbled His heart to obey the Scriptures.

[32 : 18] May we do the same. We are dismissed.