**More Like the Master**

In His Use of Scripture (Part 1)

Lesson 8

*“…and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day,*

*and stood up to read” (Luke 4:16)*

**Jesus the Word**

John opens his gospel this way: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (John 1:1) … *“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14). Jesus was the Word of God in the flesh. He was the embodiment of truth and as such, he always held in high esteem the word of God contained in scripture.

The word “scripture” comes from the Greek word *graphia*, meaning “writing”. God’s word has been recorded in writing (*graphia*) or “scripture” since the time of Moses (references to OT passages are called “scripture” in these NT verses: Galatians 3:8,22; 1 Timothy 5:18; James 2:8,23; 4:5-6; 1 Peter 2:6). The record of writing (*graphia*) God’s word began with Genesis and ended with the Revelation of John. When we speak of the Bible, then, we are speaking of *“the sacred writings”* of God’s word (2 Timothy 3:15).

When Jesus lived on the earth, he had a positive attitude and approach toward the Old Testament writings (scriptures) that were available to him at that time. Jesus was *“born under the Law”* (Galatians 4:4), and as such, he read, respected, and lived by the Old Law. The attitude that Jesus had toward the Old Law is the same attitude that we should have today toward the New Law. What can we learn from Jesus’ example concerning his attitude toward the scriptures? This lesson will focus on Jesus and his use of scripture. Our next lesson in this series will focus on the Christian’s use of scripture as he follows Jesus’ example.

**Jesus and His Use of Scripture**

Jesus knew the scriptures. Jesus, from an early age, was interested in knowing his Father’s word (Luke 2:46-47,52). He regularly read from the OT scriptures. He made it a custom to enter the synagogue and read from God’s word (Luke 4:16). On this occasion at Nazareth, Jesus was handed the book of Isaiah and without using modern chapter and verse divisions, he *“found the place where it was written”* (Luke 4:17). He clearly knew the word of God. Jesus also regularly quoted from the OT scriptures. He often responded to others with *“It is written…”* and then he would quote the passage of scripture (Matthew 4:4,7,10; 21:13; 26:31; etc.). Throughout his ministry, Jesus quoted from Moses, David, and the prophets. At the end of his ministry, Jesus expounded or explained *“all the scriptures the things concerning himself”* (Luke 24:27; see also 24:32,45). Jesus never had a formal adult education (like in a Rabbinic school), but he amazed others with his knowledge of God’s word (John 7:15).

In contrast, there were those in Jesus’ day who did not know the word of God. Jesus would often expose his critics for their lack of knowledge and understanding of God’s word. Matthew recorded these words: *“Jesus said unto them, Did you never read in the scriptures…”* (Matthew 21:42) and in another place these words, *“But Jesus answered and said unto them, You do err, not knowing the scriptures…”* (Matthew 22:29; see also Mark 12:10,24). Jesus would often ask, *“Have you not read…”* (Matthew 12:3,5; 19:4; 22:31; Mark 12:10,26; Luke 6:3) or *“Did you never read…”* (Matthew 21:16,42; Mark 2:25). Jesus wanted his critics to see their failure to know and comprehend the word of God. They could know the scriptures but they chose not to know them. Jesus told the Jews, *“Search the scriptures…”* (John 5:39). Paul would later point out that the Jewish leaders at this time simply did not know the voices of the prophets which were read every Sabbath (Acts 13:15,27). When Moses was read in the Jewish synagogues, their understanding of heart was veiled and darkened (2 Corinthians 3:14-15).

Jesus believed the scriptures. First, Jesus believed the OT scriptures to be the Holy Spirit-inspired word of God. For example, in Mark 12:36 Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1 and said that David spoke by the Holy Spirit.

Second, because Jesus believed the scriptures to be God’s word, he also believed them true and factual in every detail. For example, he believed the scripture record of Jonah and the whale to be true (Matthew 12:39-41). He believed these Old Testament events to be true: the creation account (Matthew 19:4-6), the story of Noah and the flood (Matthew 24:37-38), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15; Luke 10:12), the 10 commandments being from God (Matthew 15:4; 19:17), the miracle of the manna from heaven (John 6:49), Elijah raising the dead child (Luke 4:25-26), and the miraculous cure of Naaman (Luke 4:27). On another occasion, Jesus said, *“as the scripture has said…”* (John 7:38), showing that he believed each word of scripture to be true. Later, he said, “*the scripture cannot be broken”* (John 10:35), showing again that he believed the truthfulness of scripture. Jesus said, *“Thy word is truth”* (John 17:17).

Third, Jesus believed the OT scriptures to be authoritative. When he confronted the Pharisees and their human traditions, he said that they were transgressing the commandment of God and making void the word of God (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-9). Jesus said *“It is written”* and *“Have you not read?”* multiple times during his ministry showing the authoritative nature of scripture. He told the cleansed leper to go and offer what *“Moses commanded”* (Matthew 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14). When asked about putting-away (divorce), Jesus said, *“What did Moses command you?”* (Mark 10:3). He told the rich young ruler to *“keep the commandments”* (Matthew 19:17; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20). Jesus made reference to the “commandments” of God’s word multiple times during his ministry and he believed that those “commandments” were to be kept and not broken (Matthew 5:19). Jesus believed the scriptures to be authoritative because he believed his Father’s word was authoritative (John 12:49-50; 14:31).

Fourth, Jesus believed the OT scriptures to be powerful enough to convert. In telling the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus said, *“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead”* (Luke 16:31). After Jesus was resurrected, the hearts of the two Emmaus travelers burned as Jesus opened the scriptures to them (Luke 24:32). God’s word is powerful enough to change lives.

Fifth, Jesus believed the OT scriptures to be prophetic of his own work and that every OT scripture would be fulfilled. He believed that even the smallest letter of God’s word (one jot or one tittle) would be fulfilled (Matthew 5:18). Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews, *“You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me”* (John 5:39). At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus read from Isaiah in a synagogue in Nazareth, and said, *“Today has this scripture been fulfilled in your ears”* (Luke 4:21). He believed he “fulfilled” what the Old Testament scriptures said about him (Matthew 26:24,31,54,56; see also Mark 14:21,27,49; 15:28; John 12:28; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 18:9,32; 19:24,28,36,37; Luke 18:31; 22:37; John 12:14-15; 15:25). After his resurrection, Jesus wanted his disciples to understand how he completely fulfilled God’s word. Luke records: *“And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself”* (Luke 24:27; see also 24:32,44-46). Jesus also wanted his disciples to believe the scripture the same way that he did (John 2:17,22; 12:16; 20:9).

Finally, Jesus believed that OT prophecies concerning nations would be fulfilled. He believed, for example, that Daniel’s words concerning the destruction of Jerusalem would be fulfilled in the days of his disciples. He said, *“For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled”* (Luke 21:22; see Daniel 9:24-27).

In contrast, there were those in Jesus’ day who did not believe the scriptures. Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews, *“For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words”* (John 5:46-47).

Jesus respected the scriptures. Jesus knowing the OT scriptures and believing them led him to honor and respect the scriptures. The Law of Moses was over 1,400 years old and yet Jesus had respect for these words. When Jesus read from Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth, he *“stood up to read”* showing his respect for God’s word (Luke 4:16; see the similar respect shown in Nehemiah 8:5 when God’s word was read). Jesus handled the scriptures in a way that showed respect for them. He interpreted the scriptures in their context and did not misuse them (Matthew 4:6-7). He also said, *“Take heed how you hear”* (Luke 8:18).

In contrast, there were those in Jesus’ day who did not respect the scriptures. For example, they held their own religious traditions in higher esteem than the scriptures (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-9).

Jesus obeyed the scriptures. Jesus was born, he lived, and he died under the Old Law (Galatians 4:4). As a faithful Jew, Jesus obeyed the OT scriptures. Jesus had a good example of obedience in his parents. When Jesus was born, his parents obeyed God’s word and brought Jesus to Jerusalem to be circumcised *“as it is written in the Law of the Lord”* (Luke 2:22-24). Jesus came to fulfill and keep the Old Law to the letter (Matthew 5:17-20). Jesus also taught others to obey scripture. He told a woman on one occasion who had extolled his mother, *“Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it”* (Luke 11:28). After Jesus healed a leper on one occasion, he told the man to go offer the gift that Moses commanded (Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14). Jesus wanted this man to obey what was taught in Leviticus 13 and 14 concerning the healing of leprosy (see especially Leviticus 13:49; 14:2ff). He did not want his followers to be like the Pharisees who said they obeyed but really did not (Matthew 23:2-3).

In contrast, there were those in Jesus’ day including religious leaders who would not obey the scriptures. Jesus said, *“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven…”* (Matthew 5:19). Some of the religious leaders of Jesus’ day would *“say and do not”* (Matthew 23:3) and they would leave *“undone the weightier matters of the law…”* (Matthew 23:23).

Jesus taught the scriptures. Jesus taught people using the OT scriptures. In his sermon on the mount, Jesus spoke of the importance of doing and teaching God’s word (Matthew 5:19). Jesus would often quote scriptures during his teaching and use the words, *“It is written…”* When Jesus was in Capernaum, he *“spake the word unto them”* (Mark 2:2). He quoted from Malachi 3:1 to teach about the identity of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; 9:12-13; Luke 7:18-35). He quoted from Hosea 6:6 to teach about the importance of mercy (Matthew 9:13). He quoted from passages like Exodus 16:4 and Nehemiah 9:15 (bread from heaven) to teach how that he was the true bread that came from heaven (John 6:31). On the same occasion at Capernaum, Jesus quoted from Isaiah 54:13 to show how God teaches men (John 6:45). Later, at the Passover in Jerusalem, Jesus referenced passages of scripture like Isaiah 44:3, 55:1, and 58:11, when he promised the Holy Spirit to those who believed on him (John 7:38-39). As Jesus taught, he did three things with the scriptures: 1) he taught people what the scriptures said (Luke 24:27); 2) he applied the scriptures to people’s lives (Luke 10:27,37); and 3) he corrected misunderstandings that people had about the scriptures (Matthew 19:7-8; 22:23-33). Jesus also encouraged others to go out and teach God’s word. He told one follower, *“but you go and preach the kingdom of God”* (Luke 9:60; see also Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:19-20).

In contrast, there were those in Jesus’ day who focused more on the teaching of the religious leaders than the teaching of God’s word. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus compared what the religious leaders taught with his inspired word (Matthew 5:21-22,27-28,31-32,33-34,38-39,43-44). Jesus taught people on this occasion with authority from God and *“not as their scribes”* (Matthew 7:29). The teaching of the *“tradition of the elders”* (Matthew 15:2-3; Mark 7:3,5,8,9,13; see also Galatians 1:14) was often more important to the people than the teaching of the *“word of God”* (Matthew 15:6; Mark 7:13; Luke 8:11,21; John 10:35). Paul later pointed out how that religious teachers of the day would not practice what they taught others (Romans 2:20).

Jesus used the scriptures. Jesus utilized the OT scriptures in his own life. He practiced what he preached. He would not live without God’s word in his life. He said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”* (Matthew 4:4). He would often quote scripture on various occasions and use the words, *“It is written…”* First, he used scripture to guard against temptation. When Jesus faced the temptations of the Devil in the wilderness, he responded each time with *“It is written…”* as he quoted from the book of Deuteronomy (Matthew 4:4,7,10; Luke 4:1-13).

Second, he used scripture to defend his own righteous actions. Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61:1-2 to defend his mission to preach and heal (Luke 4:16-21) and he quoted from Isaiah 56:7 to defend his cleansing of the temple (Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46). He referenced Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15 to defend the number of witnesses he had for himself (John 8:17). He quoted from Psalm 82:6 to defend his description as the *“Son of God”* (John 10:34-36).

Third, he used scripture to answer questions. When Jesus was asked by a certain lawyer, *“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”*, Jesus answered, *“What is written in the law? How do you read it?”* (Luke 10:25-26).

Finally, Jesus used scripture to refute the errors of men. Jesus quoted from Isaiah 29:13, Exodus 20:12 (Deuteronomy 5:16), and Exodus 21:17 (Leviticus 20:9) when he rebuked the Pharisees and scribes for their hypocritical, man-made traditions (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:6). On another occasion, Jesus quoted from Psalm 118:22 (*“The stone which the builders rejected…”*) to show how the Jews had rejected the Son whom the Father had sent into the world (Matthew 21:33-36; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 19:9-18).

In contrast, there were those in Jesus’ day who used the scriptures in a distorted way to defend their unjust actions and teachings or to simply test Jesus (Matthew 5:21,27,31,33,38,43; 19:7; 22:23-28; 22:34-36; John 7:42).

**More Like the Master in His Use of Scripture**

Jesus **OUTFITTED** his life with a complete knowledge of the scriptures. Jesus **ADMITTED** the scriptures to be the very word of God. Jesus **COMMITTED** the scriptures to memory. Jesus **PERMITTED** the scriptures to speak for themselves. Jesus **SUBMITTED** his life to the scriptures each day. Jesus **TRANSMITTED** the message of the scriptures to others for their good. Jesus **BENEFITTED** his life by using the scriptures all throughout his ministry. Do we really know, believe, respect, obey, teach, and use the word of God in our daily living? May God help us all to be “More Like the Master” in our attitude toward the scriptures!

**Questions**

1. What does the word “scripture” mean?

2. How did Jesus demonstrate his knowledge of the scriptures?

3. How did Jesus demonstrate his belief in the scriptures?

4. How did Jesus demonstrate his respect for the scriptures?

5. How did Jesus demonstrate his obedience to the scriptures?

6. How did Jesus demonstrate his teaching of the scriptures?

7. How did Jesus demonstrate his use the scriptures in his everyday life?