

Jesus and Inerrancy
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Introduction

We are called "Christians" as followers of Christ.
Jesus Christ is our example; what did he think of the Bible?

His General Attitude

Jesus' own language is filled with allusions to Scripture.
Again and again he quotes Scripture: 74 times, according to the very modest estimate in the 3rd edition of the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament*.

What about Jesus' remarks in the Sermon on the Mount?

Doesn't Jesus set himself against Scripture six times in Matthew 5:21-48?

"You have heard ... (quotes Scripture) ... but I say"

(21-22) murder, Ex 20:13 or Deut 5:17

(27-28) adultery, Ex 20:4 or Deut 5:18

(31-32) divorce, Deut 24:1, 3

(33-34) vows, Lev 19:12 and Num 30:2

(38-39) eye for eye, Ex 21:24, Lev 24:20 or Deut 19:21

(43-44) love neighbor, Lev 19:18

But note the context, Matt 5:17-19

Jesus came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it (17)

Until heaven and earth pass, not one jot or tittle (18)

Whoever annuls least command will be least in kingdom (19)

Therefore, if Jesus is setting himself against Scripture, he is also contradicting himself.

What is Jesus doing, then?

Note Matt 5:20: righteousness surpasses that of scribes and Pharisees

Note phrase "heard it said," not Jesus' usual phrases for citing Scripture:

"it is written," or "haven't you read?"

These points suggest he is dealing with Rabbinic oral traditions (some now preserved in the Talmud), which are interpretations of Biblical law; Jesus attacks such interpretations elsewhere:

Matt 9:11-13: eating with sinners

Matt 12:1-8, 9-14: Sabbath keeping

Matt 15:1-9: ceremonial washing

Matt 19:3-9: divorce

Matthew 23 especially: Jesus' woes to Pharisees

In agreement with this, the first and last examples (Matt 5: 21, 43) add to the law.

Solution: Jesus is responding to the following faulty interpretations:

- (1) Murder is liable to punishment, but hatred is not.
- (2) Adultery is wicked, but lust is not.
- (3) Divorce is permitted, so it is OK.
- (4) False vows are wrong, but a false statement without a vow is not.
- (5) Personal vengeance is allowed by law.
- (6) Love your neighbor, but hate your enemy.

Thus, in these cases, rather than Jesus correcting the law, we see him with such a high regard for it that he cannot let others go unanswered when they misinterpret it.

Jesus Teaching the People (e.g., Matt 11:1-30; 12:39-42)

An answer to take back to John the Baptist (11:4-6)

Allusions to Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1

Jesus' point is that he is fulfilling prophecy.

The place of John the Baptist (11:9-10)

Quotes Mal 3:1 with "it is written"

John is seen as the fulfillment of prophecy.

Woes to Unrepentant Cities (11:20-24)

Jesus' refers to Sodom and its fall as historical, like Tyre and Sidon.

Woes to Unbelieving Generations (12:39-42)

Jesus refers to historicity of Jonah, Queen of Sheba, Solomon's wisdom.

Summary: Jesus believes in real and detailed fulfillment of prophecy, and in the historicity of Biblical narratives, or at least he teaches like he does.

Jesus Arguing with Leaders (e.g., Mark 12:18-37)

With Sadducees on Resurrection (18-27)

Their trouble is that they don't understand Scripture (24).

Jesus cites Exodus 6:3

With Lawyer on Great Commandment (28-34)

Jesus cites Deut 6:4; Lev 19:18 (29-31)

He commends the lawyer (34).

With Pharisees on Messiah's Person (35-37)

Jesus accepts Psalm title on Psalm 110 (36-37).

He argues on the basis of one word "Lord" (37).

He notes that "David says by the Holy Spirit" (36).

Jesus Laying His Life on the Line (Luke 4:1-13; Mark 14:49, 60-62)

When Tempted by Satan (Luke 4:1-13)

Surely no need to pander to Satan's "belief system"!

Note 3-fold use of "it is written" by Jesus.

Jesus bases his responses on Scripture, though it may cost him his life.

He refutes Satan's *misuse* of Scripture.

When Arrested (Mark 14:49)

Jesus does not resist.

He notes the fulfillment of Scripture (possibly Isa 53:12; Zech 13:7).

When on Trial for His Life (Mark 14:60-62)

Jesus is put on oath re/ the capital charge of blasphemy.

Jesus seals his Messianic claim with the citation of Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13 applied to himself as to be fulfilled in the future.

Jesus Instructing His Disciples after the Resurrection (Luke 24:-25-27, 32, 44-48)

On the Road to Emmaus (25-27, 32)

The disciples are "fools not to believe *all* the prophets have spoken" (25).

It was "necessary for the Christ to suffer and to enter glory" (26).

Jesus, "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, explained the things concerning himself in the Scriptures" (27).

Disciples: "Didn't our hearts burn while explained Scriptures?" (32)

Upper Room in Jerusalem (44-48)

Jesus: "All things written about me in the Law & Prophets *must* be fulfilled" (44).

He "opened their minds to understand Scriptures" (45).

Jesus: "Thus it is written..."

(1) suffering of Christ

(2) resurrection of Christ

(3) repentance & forgiveness in his name to all nations

Conclusions

1. Jesus never played down, minimized or found fault with Scripture; why should we?
2. Jesus taught from it and argued on the basis of it.
3. He accepted as historical those passages most maligned today: creation, the flood, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Davidic authorship of the psalms, historicity of Jonah, Queen of Sheba, Sodom and Gomorrah.

4. Though one might claim he was condescending to the views of the people of his time in this, he showed no reluctance to correct them when wrong. This certainly doesn't apply to his conflict with Satan.
5. Though one might claim that Jesus abandoned his divine knowledge during his earthly ministry, he would still be protected by whatever process was used for the apostles and prophets (recall Deut 18:21-22). Without inspiration, he know nothing of God's program; with it, we are told that Scripture is inerrant.
6. The contrast between Jesus' attitude toward Scripture and that of modern deniers of inerrancy is striking. For Jesus, whatever Scripture said, God said.