

Roundtable Bible Discussion Series:
How Jesus Used the Old Testament



hosted by
**Christadelphians of Champaign County &
The UIUC Student Chapter of the Christadelphians**

Part 1: How Jesus Used the Old Testament in General

1. In addition to citing Moses and the Psalms to establish and endorse his teaching, Jesus called on the writings of the prophets to reinforce and emphasize his teaching. Luke 24 records what he said to two groups of disciples after he had risen from the dead:

25 And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" **27** And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

44 Then he said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." **45** Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,

Comparable references as to the general inclusion of the OT are found in Mt 5:17, 22:40.

2. Jesus could have argued that his teaching was correct and worthy of acceptance because he was God's Son—but he did not. OT Scripture was his authority. They not only spoke about him, but were sufficient to make his teaching have divine authority (cf. Jn 5:37-47).
3. For Jesus, Scripture could not be broken, that is, it is inherently true and must be fulfilled. OT teaching should not be watered down or replaced by the words of men (cf. Jn 10:34-38, 17:17, Mt 15:1-6).
4. Jesus invariably argued his points using an OT phrase or idea (e.g., Mt 12:38-42, 13:11-17, 21:16, 33-43, 23:29-39, Jn 6:45).
5. Jesus clearly understood and presented Scripture in a way quite different from all others (e.g. Mk 1:27, Mt 22:15-22, Jn 6:52-69, 7:46); he opened up the understanding of the OT, primarily because they spoke of him and he was best able to explain the meaning (e.g. Lk 4:16-21, Jn 5:39). So Jesus makes the OT teaching come alive and much more comprehensible (cf. Lk 24:25-32, Acts 1:3).
6. But Jesus did not really introduce any new teaching in the sense that it contradicted or repudiated the OT teaching. The OT is the basis of all NT teaching and Jesus' message is the same as the message of the prophets. For example:
 - the Lord's prayer taught in Mt 6:9-13 has a 1Chr 29:10-13 background.
 - the two great commandments taught in Mt 22:26-40 tied together Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18.
 - the prediction of Jerusalem's overthrow and Christ's return taught in Mt 24:15 cites Dan 9:27.

The next page provides four examples from each of the Gospels to illustrate how Jesus cited, alluded to, or adopted OT text to argue his case and establish his teaching.

Matthew

1. *9:10-13 cites Hosea 6:6* — to teach the leaders that they should go and learn what "desire mercy" means.
2. *11:7-15 quotes Malachi 3:1* — to teach the people about the greatness of the prophet John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 17:10-13).
3. *13:10-17 quotes Isaiah 6:9-10* — to explain why he taught in parables, and why the apostles were privileged to understand.
4. *19:4-9 cites Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, and ties in a teaching of Moses in Deut 24:1-4* — to explain the basis of his teaching on marriage and divorce.

Mark

1. *2:23-28 cites the story of David in 1 Samuel 21:1-6* — to show that the Sabbath was made for man and that Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath.
2. *7:1-8 quotes Isaiah 29:13* — to expose the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (their traditions and external cleansings).
3. *7:21-23 builds on Jeremiah 4:14; 7:24; 179* — to remind the disciples of a key teaching, namely, that the human heart is the source of all evil thoughts, etc.
4. *12:36 cites Psalm 110:1* — to provide Jesus a question & counter-argument to compel his critics to see that as the Christ, he was greater than king David.

Luke

1. *4:16-31 quotes Isaiah 61:1,2* — to show how he was fulfilling Scripture before their very eyes, in their very hearing.
2. *11:29-32 cites Jonah 3.4,5 and 1 Kings 10:1* — to use Jonah & the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba & Solomon as examples to prompt his hearers into belief in himself as the Messiah, who was much greater.
3. *13:6-9 uses Jeremiah 8:13 and Hosea 9:10 as the background for his parable of the fig tree* — to give a warning to Israel of its impending destruction.
4. *20:37-38 makes reference to the writing of Moses in Ex 3:6* — where the fact that God is God of the living and not the dead is used as proof of the resurrection, thus refuting the Sadducee belief.

John

1. *2:13-16 alludes to Zechariah 14:2.1 and Jeremiah 7:8-11* — to explain his ousting of the temple moneychangers and to remind his disciples that the temple cleansing must happen.
2. *7:38 consolidates the teaching of Isaiah 44:3; 55:1; 58:11; Joel 3:18; and Zechariah 13:1* — to help the Jews understand that he was the promised Messiah.
3. *10:34 cites Psalm 82:6* — to prove that Jesus was not blaspheming when he called himself the Son of God.
4. *17:6-19 claims that the Scriptures were now fulfilled*—to emphasize that the time spent developing his disciples was according to God's will.

Conclusion

- (a) Belief in the prophetic message demands belief in Jesus and a corresponding change in life.
- (b) Understanding the Old Testament is made easier by having the New Testament writings, especially the words of Jesus.
- (c) Fulfilled Scripture concerning Jesus' first coming indicates the certainty of fulfillment of Scripture concerning his second coming; that time seems to be near!
- (d) We need to use the whole Bible in order to understand God's message of salvation to us.
- (e) Jesus used Old Testament Scripture to instruct himself (cf. 2Tim. 3:16, 17); disciples should do likewise.