

Bible Study 5

Jesus' Usage of Jewish Scripture

Aim: To examine how Jesus interprets and employs the Jewish Scriptures within the Gospels, and to consider how Christians today may receive these texts as a summons to faithful discipleship, holy living, and participation in the purposes of God.

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, open our hearts and minds as we study your Word. Help us to hear the Scriptures as Jesus taught them, to recognize your liberating work among us, and to respond with faith, humility, and holy living. Guide our conversation, deepen our understanding, and form us into a community that bears witness to your justice, mercy, and peace. Amen.

The following questions are intended to guide readers from historical context toward theological reflection and personal response. They provide a framework for considering how Jesus reads Scripture and how his interpretation shapes Christian faith and practice.

Learning Guide Questions

- What might Jewish Scripture have meant within its own historical and theological context?
- What should we understand about the imagination and hope of the First Testament?
- How does Jesus interpret Scripture in relation to his mission and message?
- How can Christians today hear Jesus' call to holy living?

Having established these guiding questions, the study now turns to selected Gospel passages in which Jesus engages Scripture during moments of conflict, teaching, and theological clarification.

Primary Texts

Opening Reflection Question: What does Jesus' conflict in the Temple with the religious leaders teach us about remaining faithful to God's leading when authority, tradition, and public pressure are in tension?

Readings: Matthew 21: 23-27; 22:23-33; 22:34-40; 22:41-46

Matthew 21:23-27

In Matthew 21:23-27, Jesus is confronted in the Temple by leaders who question the source and legitimacy of his authority. Their challenge reveals a deeper conflict between established religious power and the emerging proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven in Jesus' ministry.

Commentary:

Jesus re-enters the Temple in Jerusalem, and the scene becomes a focal point of conflict with influential religious leaders in the city. These leaders, including the Pharisees and Sadducees, represent forms of authority that resist the Kingdom of Heaven as proclaimed in the teaching and ministry of Jesus. His growing influence challenges their assumptions, their public standing, and their understanding of Israel's faithfulness to God. The question in Matthew 21:23 is therefore central to the conflict that leads toward the cross: "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"

How should followers of Jesus respond when powerful voices question their obedience to God's direction and their commitment to the values of God's kingdom?

Matthew 21:33-46.

This stage of the conflict uses parables to expose the failure and unfaithfulness of the leaders. The image of the vineyard echoes Isaiah 5:1-7, where the vineyard represents God's people and the expectation of covenant faithfulness. In Matthew 21:33-46, the tenant farmers represent Israel's leadership, while the servants recall the prophets who were sent to call the people back to God's will.

Matthew 5:12; 23:31, 34, and 37 suggest a recurring pattern in which leadership resists the will of God and acts contrary to the Torah and the way of God's kingdom. When leaders fail to guide the people in faithfulness, the Jesus movement emerges as a renewed witness to God's purposes. This tension between established authority and faithful renewal raises enduring questions about relevance, obedience, and the relationship between faith and culture.

The main focus is the questions being asked that are at the source of faith and practice in relation to Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

Discussion Question: When our faithfulness to God is questioned by others, how can we discern whether our response is shaped by fear, pride, or obedience to God's kingdom?

Question Area 1

[Question about the taxes – Matthew 22:15-22](#)

The Pharisees attempt to entrap Jesus by involving the Herodians, who were associated with support for Herod and the Roman order. Jesus avoids the trap by offering a response that acknowledges civic obligation without granting ultimate allegiance to Rome. His answer maintains a careful distinction between political necessity and devotion to God.

After addressing challenges to his authority and allegiance, the study now turns to a second dispute in which Jesus responds to questions about resurrection. This movement shows that Jesus' use of Scripture addresses not only public authority but also the hope and destiny of God's people.

Question Area 2

[Question about the Resurrection – Matthew 22:23-33](#)

In responding to the question about resurrection, Jesus does not appeal first to Daniel 12:2-3, a passage often associated with resurrection hope. Instead, he draws attention to God's self-

identification as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thereby grounding resurrection hope in the continuing faithfulness and life-giving presence of God.

“They asked, “Teacher, Moses said, if a man who doesn’t have children dies, his brother must marry his wife and produce children for his brother.” (24) See Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

“As for the resurrection of the dead, haven’t you read what God told you, I’m the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He isn’t the God of the dead but of the living.” (31-32). With Jesus answer See Exodus 36:6, 15-16.

a. Maccabees 7:19; 16:25 - Don’t you know this is implied. This is because they believe that they don’t die to God but rather continue to live for God like the ancestors of our nation, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (7:19)

They knew very well that those who die for God will also live in God’s presence, just like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the ancestors of the nation. (16:25)

b. Resurrection for Gospel is different form of bodily life. See Matthew 9: 18-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:35-50.

Discussion Question: What does Jesus’ teaching that God is “God of the living” reveal about resurrection, hope, and our present life with God?

From the question of resurrection, the study proceeds to a question concerning the heart of faithful obedience. Jesus’ answer gathers the commandments around love, showing that Scripture’s moral vision is fulfilled through devotion to God and love for one’s neighbor.

Question Area 3:

Question about the Greatest Commandment – Matthew 22:34-40

This question carries a complex history within Jewish interpretation. According to biblical study notes and related sources, the question posed in Matthew 22:34 concerns how the commandments are to be understood in relation to one another. Jesus' response does not dismiss the wider law; rather, it gathers the law's meaning around love for God and love for neighbor.

- a. rabbis discussed 613 commandments for find the important ones.
- b. David in the Psalms reduced them to 11 commandments [Read Psalm 15].
- c. The prophet Micah reduced them to three [Read Micah 6:8], etc.

Jesus suggested two in Matthew 22: 37-39

1st – Deuteronomy 6:5

2nd – Leviticus 19:18

Discussion Question: Did Jesus answer by naming the greatest commandment only, or was he also teaching us how Scripture should guide love of God, love of neighbor, and holy living?

The final question moves from commandments to Christology. Having shown how Scripture guides faithful living, Jesus now uses Scripture to broaden the understanding of the Messiah's identity and mission.

Question Area 4:

Question about David's Son- Whose son is the Messiah? Asked Jesus.

The popular answer would have identified the Messiah as David's son. By implication, the son was expected to carry forward the

purposes of the royal ancestor and fulfill hopes for Israel's deliverance from foreign domination and oppressive rule. This expectation was both visionary and deeply rooted in Israel's scriptural imagination.

Read Matthew 22:2 as to the answer. See 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 89:3-4.

Matthew 22:43-45 is based on Psalm 110:1.

The identity and mission of Christ expanded over time.

The idea is to share God's divine identity to be addressed even by his Father as Lord.

Jesus suggests that the Messiah's identity and mission exceed inherited cultural and political expectations. By drawing on Psalm 110:1, he points toward a greater divine purpose in which the Messiah is not limited to national aspiration but is revealed in relation to the lordship and purposes of God.

Discussion Question: How does Jesus' question about David's son expand our understanding of the Messiah beyond cultural expectation toward God's larger purpose?

Discussion Question: What do these Scripture passages invite us to observe about Jesus' authority, the hope of resurrection, the command to love, and the identity of the Messiah?

Summary

In these passages, Jesus uses the Jewish Scriptures not simply to answer questions but to reveal the deeper purposes of God. He challenges religious authority when it resists the work of God's kingdom, teaches resurrection as life held in the presence of the living God, gathers the commandments around love of God and neighbor, and expands the understanding of the Messiah beyond inherited expectations. The study invites us to hear Scripture as a living witness that shapes faithful discernment, holy living, and participation in God's justice, mercy, and peace.

Closing Prayer

Holy and living God, we give thanks for the gift of your Word and for the way Jesus opens the Scriptures to reveal your kingdom. Strengthen us to follow Christ with courage when our faith is tested, with hope rooted in the resurrection, and with love for you and for our neighbors. Free us from narrow expectations that limit your work, and form us into a people who seek justice, practice mercy, and walk humbly with you. May what we have learned shape our thoughts, words, and actions, so that our lives bear witness to your grace and peace. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.