

THE MEANING OF SCRIPTURE Luke 24:13-27

When I was first learning how to play the guitar, I was given an acoustic guitar with no strings. So, I went to the music store and bought some strings. It didn't take long for me to figure out that those strings weren't working right and the neck of the guitar seemed to be warping. I found out later that I had been putting steel strings on a nylon-stringed guitar, a big no-no, and nearly destroyed the guitar. I was using it the wrong way, not the way it was intended to be used. Too often, we start to use something with a purpose, then forget why we use it, and often end up running things that have no purpose. Some churches start a program like Vacation Bible School as an outreach, but in time they lose the vision for it and it becomes nothing more than tradition. Often programs in the church and para-church ministries become like this, intending to be a help to the church but eventually just becoming involved in self-preservation.

Our passage tells us that many of us in the contemporary American Church have been misusing the Bible. It's still central- every evangelical knows that the Bible is the bedrock of their faith, after all we're the 'people of the book.' But the question we're forced to ask is, what is the meaning of Scripture? My one goal today is to sow you what Jesus claims here: Scripture is the revelation of Jesus. Its highest purpose is to reveal God in Christ.

How do you commonly look at the Scriptures?

Scripture is not:

A rule book or ethical study. This is what many critics of Christianity assume about the Bible. And it's true that the laws that God would have every human live by are written here. But, the Bible isn't primarily written to give all of the answers to our ethical situations- *it's written to lead us to a Person.* Certainly right living results from knowing Christ, but the reverse is never true (right living leads us the Christ).

A missions handbook. The Bible is deeply concerned about missions, about taking the gospel to those who've never heard. But, it's also clear that the repudiation of the gospel and gospel missionaries is a part of God's plan. Paul says in Romans that the gospel is a fragrance leading to both life and death. Jesus is glorified by both His friends and His enemies, by both the success and failure of missions. That's the point- Jesus' glory, not the number of people in heaven.

A dagger used in debate. I remember going to a 'revival service' in college where the speaker encouraged us to use the Bible as an offensive weapon in evangelism. He used Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword..." This sounds good, but what does 4:13 say? "And no creature is hidden from *his* sight." The word, as it's used here, is not the Bible- it's Jesus! Listen to these words from a pastor named Gordon Atkinson: "There's something about the way you use the bible, something about the way you use it as a tool, as a weapon, as a fulcrum, as a means, as an end, as a trump card. There's something about the way you see the bibles as a thing to be used at all... The more you know about the bible, the more power you hope to gain. The more verses you can quote, the closer to God you hope to be. The bible is your prop and your flag. You wave it around and make sure that it is seen... The bible is not a book for those who need a weapon. It is not a book for those who know where they are going and what questions they will ask. It is not a book for those who are

in a hurry and looking for the shortest route. The bible is a book for pilgrims and wanderers. It is a book for children and for those who wish to become children again. It is a book for seekers and searchers and dreamers. It is a book for anyone and everyone who hopes that the desires of God might be written upon their hearts.”

We have an interesting context in our passage. It’s right after the resurrection, and two of Jesus’ disciples (not of the 12 apostles) are walking together discussing the events surrounding Christ. They clearly don’t believe that He’s alive because verse 17 tells us that they are sad. Not hopeful, not pensive, but sad. Even with the excitement of a clearly empty tomb and the women seeing angels telling them Jesus was alive, they still do not believe. Why don’t they believe? Because they haven’t understood the story. When they read the Old Testament, they saw rules and wars and power struggles, but they clearly didn’t see the one hope that would keep them from being sad.

So Jesus takes them back to the story; verse 27 says, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the thing concerning himself.” “Moses and the prophets” is short-hand for the Old Testament, the Scriptures that Jesus and His disciples had. “All the Scriptures” indicates that everything written points to Christ. As Charles Spurgeon once said, “We see Jesus on every page of Scripture.”

Let’s imagine we’re on that journey on the road to Emmaus. We’ll just give a little taste of this kind of interpretation:

In Genesis 1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Paul tells us in Colossians 1 and John tells us in John 1 that Jesus was there, that He is and always has been the second person of the Trinity, and that by Him and through Him all things were made. Later in Genesis 1, God says “Let us make man in our image.” He uses a plurality that only we who understand Christ understand how we were made to reflect Christ.

In Genesis 2, we read about the union of Adam and Eve, which is ultimately (as Paul tells us in Ephesians 5) a picture of Christ and His church.

In Genesis 3, after the rebellion, God calls down curses on the man, the woman, and the serpent. In the curse on the serpent He says that there will be hatred between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent and (to the serpent, who is Satan, and his implied offspring), “You shall bruise his heel, and He shall crush your head.” Where else but the cross of Christ do we find the fulfillment of this prophecy?

In Genesis 4, when Cain kills Abel, we’re told that Abel’s blood cries out from the ground for justice and yet a just God tells Cain he’ll be protected and given grace. How is this possible? The only way was for someone else’s blood to appease the injustice done to Abel. The writer of Hebrews tells us that it is Christ whose blood speaks louder than Abel’s

In Genesis 5-8, Noah is chosen by God to be spared from the coming wrath. The ark he is tasked to build is covering for God’s people in the event of destructions. When we realize that this judgment is a foreshowing of the wrath of God at the second coming, we see that we also need a covering to keep us safe from judgment and that Noah’s ark is Christ.

In Genesis 9 God promises never to destroy the earth again and gives the sign of a rainbow, a bow pointing toward heaven. When we realize that God is giving a covenant

sign that would call down a curse on Himself should the covenant be broken, we understand that this again is a foreshadowing of God's judgment on Christ on the cross.

We could go on and on, through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the law, the tabernacle, the judges, the kings, the life and trials of David, and the message of all the prophets. It is all pointing to, revealing and illuminating Jesus. By the way, this isn't just for you who are adults. Your children are getting this with our curriculum, *Show Me Jesus*, which assumes this Christological interpretive principle.

Let's make a couple of applications:

- 1) Re-read the Old Testament- or just Genesis. Again, if you've been reading it as a science textbook, you're missing the point (though it does speak to science). See Christ on every page and worship Him in His greatness and glory.
- 2) If you're having trouble believing the truth claims of Christianity, as these two disciples were, boil it down to Jesus. Forget all the rabbit-trail questions of social issues and theology- is Jesus the one Savior that was promised to our first parents Adam and Eve and has He made sense of all of Scripture?
- 3) And, if you ever hear a sermon from the Old Testament that doesn't mention Jesus, run! You're likely hearing a Pharisee, trying to get you to keep the Law without the cross.
- 4) Make Christ your center and your goal. It's interesting that this revelation of the Christ-centeredness of the Old Testament takes place right after the crucifixion and resurrection- those are the central events of all of history . Everything that took place before points to it; all that comes after seeks to understand and live by it.