

What Saith the Scripture?

The other day I was told something that I've heard many times in the past. A Christian who had been converted out of denominationalism was commenting on how different the church of Christ is from man-made religious bodies in the sense that the Lord's church seeks a "thus saith the Lord" when answering questions. This was quite different from that to which he had been accustomed in the denomination. Most of the discussions there were centered around what others in the group thought rather than on what the Lord revealed in His Word. This appeal to God's Word is what sets the church apart from earthly institutions. Our hallmark has been and should always be that we appeal not to man's opinions, but to Sacred Scripture.

This conversation led me to look up the various times in God's Word wherein appeals are made to Scripture as the final authority. The title of this article comes from Romans 4:3 in which Paul is discussing the issue of faith and works and Abraham's role in same. "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." In the context of the figures of the bondwoman and the freewoman in Galatians 4, Paul echoes this thought in verse 30 by asking, "Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."

As we continue to look at the usage of the words "scripture" as well as "scriptures" we find several interesting facts.

1. It is possible for one to be ignorant of Scripture, but only because he or she has not read it, not because God has not made it available (Mark 12:10; John 20:9).
2. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (II Timothy 3:16).
3. No Scripture is useless or empty, but each has its purpose (James 4:5).
4. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." (II Peter 1:20). God's Word did not originate in the mind of men nor was it produced without the complete, word for word inspiration of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2:7ff).
5. The only way we can know that Jesus is the Christ, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies is by reading Scripture (Mark 15:28; Luke 4:21; John 13:18; 17:12; 19:24,28; Acts 1:16).
6. Believing Scripture brings rewards (John 7:38).
7. Not knowing the Scriptures leads to error (Matthew 22:29).
8. The Scriptures are to be searched or examined (Acts 17:11).
9. We can be mighty (powerful, strong) in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24).
10. We can gain patience comfort and hope from the Scriptures (Romans 15:4).
11. False teachers can wrest (twist) the Scriptures for their own evil purposes (II Peter 3:16).
12. The Scriptures are "able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (II Timothy 3:15).

How can we allow such a powerful tool for spiritual growth as God's Holy Word to sit idly on our shelves and tables at home while we struggle with life's daily challenges? This book we know as the Bible is not a collection of short stories, entertaining missives and random snippets of worldly wisdom. Rather it is the mind of God, revealed to inspired men by the Holy Spirit. It was not given for our amusement nor was it intended to be displayed as a conversation piece in our homes. God intended for His Scriptures to be examined, lived and loved not just when the church is gathered for worship or Bible study, not just when the feeling hits us, not just when we're in desperate need for God. On a daily basis we are expected to mine the countless spiritual treasures that can be found in the Bible.

Many have resolved to read the Bible through at least one time in their lives. That is an admirable goal but how will we read it? We can scan it like the headlines in a newspaper, we can randomly flip through it like a magazine on a bookstore shelf or we can systematically study it, pausing to absorb its truth. "What saith the scripture?" As Christians we must be able to answer this question for the benefit of our souls as well as the souls of those to whom we want to teach the saving Gospel of Christ. Do you know the Scriptures? What will you do each day to improve your knowledge of God's inspired Word?

