

Reflection on Understanding Scripture

We know that:

2 Timothy 3:16 *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. [KJV]*

Yet, we remember what happened in the wilderness, shortly after Jesus' baptism:

Matthew 4:6 *and [the tempter] said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone." [ESV]*

Jesus did not take heed of the promise of those scriptures and quashed the tempter by replying:

Matthew 4:7b *....., "On the other hand, it is written, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." [NASB]*

One may then ask: what was wrong with the first scripture from the **91st Psalm**? And: why was **Deuteronomy 6:16** (cited by Jesus) a superior scripture?

Is it perhaps that not "all scripture," but only some are "given by inspiration of God"?

Or was it that the text left by Moses was the older, original instruction by the Lord and the later text — of David's time — was less authoritative?

Or was it simply that Jesus had access to a better translation or manuscript of the Bible?

It is a serious question: it is a matter of how we listen to the word of God and how we might know which is the godly understanding — and application — of the scriptures.

Here we are face-to-face with an example of the revolutionary import of the New Covenant and of the fundamental change brought about by the coming of Jesus Christ into the world.

An early example, that is, of the:

2 Corinthians 3:6b *..... [ministry] of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. [NKJV]*

Therefore, we do not wonder: what is the interpretation of the letter? Rather, we inquire: what kind of spirit was it, who cited each one of those scriptures?

The Holy Spirit of God or the apostate spirit of satan?

Satan's interpretation and use of the scriptures stemmed from the creature feigning to be an equal of God: "God said so and so, let's check up on Him and see if He can live up to His word."

Jesus' teaching is that we are not to check up on God, but to humble ourselves before Him, as His loving and beloved children.

We can be confident that indeed: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable"

That is the intent and purpose of God and one can misuse scripture to deceive: just as God's creation was good, until the serpent spoke and tempted.

Whether the deception succeeds or not depends on our spiritual understanding, as demonstrated by Jesus at the time of His temptation.

By discerning the spirit, we are able to guard against deceptive use of scripture by the tempter and by his false prophets and teachers that abound in these last times of ours.

Satan's deception aims at trying and belittling the Father: to attempt to diminish His sovereignty. Jesus' truth is to honor the Father:

John 17:4a *"I have glorified You on the earth." [NKJV]*

Jesus' purpose is always to glorify the Father: such may our intent and desire also be — as we submit ourselves to Him in a manifestation of our love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 14:15 *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." [NRSV]*