

Why Are There So Many Different Interpretations of Scripture?

Matthew 22:23-32

I. To begin, consider the following encounter between the Sadducees and Jesus: *Matt.*

22:23-32

A. Consider some of the similarities between the Sadducees and Jesus in this passage:

1. The Sadducees were a sect of the Jews that believed in God; So did Jesus
2. The Sadducees said that they believed the Scriptures; Jesus believed the Scriptures as well

B. But in spite of what they had in common, they had two very different interpretations!

1. Verse 23 states that this sect taught that there was no resurrection: yet their question was obviously based on their knowledge that Jesus *did* believe in the resurrection:

C. How is this possible? Why were there two different interpretations?

1. Jesus helps us to understand: He says in v 29: “You are *mistaken*”
 - a) In the world today that is the fast track for making someone very angry with you!
 - b) Despite the the pleas and claims from the world to establish a practice where nobody can be wrong except the one who states that others are wrong, Jesus could only make this statement if there was an objective standard-- something where absolute truth can be determined in matters of right and wrong
 - c) That was the view that Jesus demonstrated of scripture, it is the view He has now
2. In these verses, Jesus lists two reasons as to why they were mistaken in their interpretation of scripture:
 - a) We will examine both of these, as well as other scriptural examples as we seek to answer a question that is so relevant to today: *Why are there so many different interpretations?*

1. Not Knowing the Scriptures (Matt. 22:29)

- a. This was the first flaw that Jesus accused His enemies of... and it would have come as a shock not only to them, but to any that were in the audience:
 - i. The Sadducees were a religious sect of the Jews: These were pious people! Along side the Pharisees, these were the type of men that the Jews looked up to as examples:
 1. They would include scribes, religious leaders, men of great importance:
 - ii. It would seem even further out of place since they had *just quoted scripture!*
 1. But Jesus said they had a different interpretation because they did not know the Scriptures:
- b. **There are** important lessons to take away from this:
 - i. First, there is a difference between quoting a scripture and knowing the scriptures
 1. In order to know a scripture, we must give attention and respect to the context surrounding the passage, and it must be seen in light of all scripture:
 2. *Illus: Young man who wanted to study about the anti-christ in Rev. 13*
 - ii. Our culture is plagued with the illusion of knowledge: There are so many who think they know a great deal about what God's word says, and yet statistically, the average person cannot name the first four books of the New Testament:
 1. *Illus. of Jerusalem Merchant*
 - iii. The world is filled with people who, just like the Sadducees, are more than happy to give you their interpretations, but do not know the scriptures:
 1. As Hosea says: *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*

2. Not knowing the Power of God:

- a. How could it be, that not knowing the power of God could cause one to have a false interpretation of scripture?
 - i. We may look at something and see so many problems as to why we don't think it could happen, that to us, it becomes impossible:

- ii. The Sadducees saw so many problems with the idea of a resurrection, they just decided that it couldn't happen! *They failed to see the power of God*
- iii. This is a trap we must avoid: Instead of focusing on the problem, our focus must be placed on God who is greater than the problem: Otherwise-- we will be led to a different interpretation:
- b. Consider Abraham's wife Sarah: She thought that she was far too old to give birth to the son of Promise Isaac:
 - i. And yet God answers her laughter in *Gen. 18:13-14* by asking "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"
- c. Or Moses: He had no idea how he was supposed to march back to Egypt, the land he had fled and been a stranger to for 40 years, and lead Israel out of captivity: Among his many excuses was his inability at public speaking:
 - i. God replies in Ex. 4:11-- *Who Made man's mouth!*
- d. When Jeremiah prophesied that Israel would go into captivity for 70 years, God told him to go out and purchase a piece of property: For many, this would hardly seem the time!
 - i. By faith, Jeremiah said this in Jer. 32:17-- *Ab Lord Jehovah! behold, thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and by thine outstretched arm; there is nothing too hard for thee*

3. Sometimes there is a desire for what is new and novel; instead of what is true:

- a. Consider the aftermath caused by those listening to Jesus in ***John 21:22-23***
 - i. Because of this there were many who went around spreading the rumor that John was never going to die!
- b. This, by and large, is the main attitude that is represented by the world around us:
 - i. The covers of magazines... *The Real Jesus... The Judas Gospel. The Gospel of Thomas...*
 - ii. Every TV special... *Hidden secrets of the Bible... Decoding the Bible...*
 - iii. The currently running "The Bible" on the history channel:
 - i. The Guardian describes it as *History Channel's The Bible series is worse than reality TV*

c. The questions that people want to discuss reflect this as well: Seldom do people want to discuss questions like:

- i. What must I do to be saved?
- ii. What does God expect of me?
- iii. How do I worship God?

1. Instead their worlds revolve around books like *Heaven is For Real, 90 Minutes in Heaven, Proof of Heaven, 23 Minutes in Hell* <---????

d. But all of this is a continuation of a problem those who taught the truth faced even in the first century:

- i. **Acts 17:19-20**-- At First this sounds like a good thing! We would jump for joy if we had this response!
- ii. **17:21**-- They were constantly searching for some new thing
 1. This attitude, brought this response: **17:30-32**

e. Instead of looking for novelty, we need to be looking for truth!

- i. Otherwise we will fall among those described in 2 Tim. 3:7 as *always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*

4. Some have no Love of truth, but pleasure in Unrighteousness: 2 Thess. 2:10-12

a. Imagine everyone who has had any conversation with someone about a topic of wrong or right could illustrate this point:

- i. Someone will state that if you can just find *ONE* passage that clearly states _____, then they will accept that is what the Bible teaches:

1. *Ex. Jehovah's witnesses, deity of Jesus --John 1, Mormons, Authority of Joseph Smith Gal 1:8, Homosexuality 1 Cor. 6, the Right to marry, matthew 19:9. etc.*

b. If only they knew the company they kept: **Matt. 4:6-7**

- i. What was the difference between the two?
 1. Satan doesn't love truth: His pleasure is in unrighteousness: He intended to use scripture to cause Jesus to sin:
 2. Jesus loves the Father: He delighted to do His will: He knew that Psalm 91 was not instructions to try and kill yourself to show that you trust God!

5. Some play fast and loose with the scripture:

- a. The reasoning goes: If it doesn't say to specifically not do such a thing.. then feel free to do it!
 - i. Does your church have a governing president? (*calls*)
 - ii. Where does it say: "thou shalt not appoint a pope"
 - iii. or "You shall not baptize infants"
- b. But does the bible reflect this type of attitude?
 - i. *Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other. 1 Cor. 4:6*
 - ii. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11.)*
 - iii. *Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 2 John 9*
- c. For us to do anything by faith means that we do it with the authority of God's Word;
 - i. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)*

Conclusion:

Why are there so many different interpretations?

1. Not knowing the Scriptures:: Not knowing the power of God.:: Desire for novel:: No love for the truth; pleasure in unrighteousness.:: "loose construction"

2. But it **IS** possible to know the scriptures!

a. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. John 7 17

b. If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John 8:31-32

c. by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;