



Misinterpret Moses or Believe Jesus

John 5:39-47

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me (John 5:39—KJV).

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me (John 5:39—NASB).

You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf (John 5:39—NRSV).

As Jesus concluded His debate with the religious leaders who accused Him of violating their Sabbath laws by doing good, He told them what prevented them from believing what He said. One, they did not have the word of God dwelling or living within them. Two, they did not have the love of God in them. Three, they did not believe Moses, who testified and wrote about Jesus as a witness in Jesus' behalf. For these reasons, among others, they mistreated Jesus and those Jesus healed. To help these leaders, Jesus pointed them to their scriptures, the Old Testament. As valid in a court of law, their scriptures testified or bore witness on behalf of Jesus, but they misread their scriptures and only partially believed them to be true. They searched the scriptures thinking that in them they could find what was missing in their lives—eternal life. However, they mistakenly thought that eternal life was to be found and maintained by obeying the laws in the scriptures, the traditional applications of these laws by former teachers, and by interpreting the scriptures as their cultural and political circumstances changed. Their treatment of those Jesus healed and their treatment of Jesus for doing good on the Sabbath in violation of their traditions indicated that they had not found eternal life by increasing the number of laws for them and others to obey. Instead, Jesus told them they needed to believe everything that Moses wrote, and based on Moses' writings they needed to believe what Jesus said. By believing and accepting Jesus as Messiah, they would receive eternal life.

Thinking Further

1. Why did the religious leaders search the Scriptures? According to Jesus, what is one reason to study the Scriptures?
2. What are some of the benefits of coming to Jesus?
3. What was missing in the lives of the religious leaders? What was one or more of the effects of this?
4. What did Jesus say about people seeking glory?
5. When Jesus spoke to the religious leaders, what did Jesus say about Moses and them?