

How Jesus interpreted the Hebrew Scriptures:

1. "Jesus interpreted the Torah as gracious divine covenant rather than as 'law' as we might understand it. Jesus understood the Torah as an expression of God's grace just as the exodus was an expression of God's grace" (92).
2. "[I]nterpreting Scripture[, as Jesus interpreted it,] through a prophetic grid leads to a greater emphasis on the moral than on the cultic aspects of the Law and thus of Hebrew Scripture" (92).
3. "Jesus had a prophetic rather than a legalistic understanding of the content of righteousness. For the prophets, true righteousness consisted of deeds of love, mercy and justice, especially to the most vulnerable" (93).
4. "Jesus reflect[ed] a prophetic emphasis in his attention to what Vermes calls the 'inward aspects' and 'root causes' of behavior; in other words, his attention to the heart or character. . . . Jesus repeatedly called his listeners to turn from an emphasis on ritual defilement and outward purity toward an awareness of the inner wellsprings of real moral purity or defilement as they are expressed in behavior to others" (93 f.).

"In sum, . . . Jesus wholeheartedly affirmed the validity and continuing authority of the Law and the Prophets; that is, the Hebrew Bible. He was saying that we are obligated to obey them to the letter (Mt 5:17-20) and are called to be 'perfect' in our righteousness (Mt 5:48)—*but not in the way that the scribes and Pharisees defined authority, obedience and righteousness*. It was a clash of interpretive grids—Jesus, on his own authority, on the basis of his prophetic reading of Scripture, against the reigning casuistic legalism of the major interpretive tradition of his day. He claimed authority to see meanings in the Scripture that this tradition and its authorized interpreters were not seeing, and these interpreters in their turn perceived Jesus' claim as a radical abrogation of Scripture and tradition, and a radical challenge to their own authority" (94 f.).

From Glen H. Stassen & David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003): 92-95.