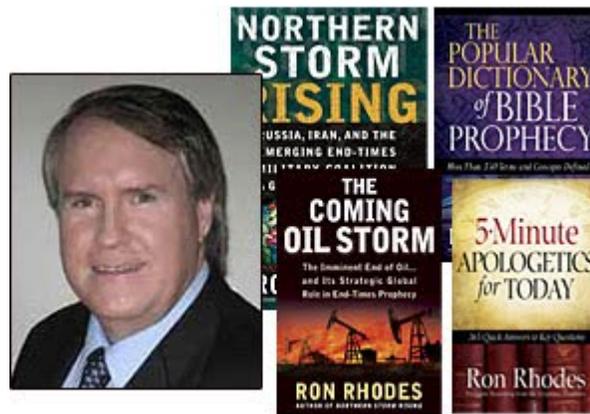


[Quick Q&A: How Can We Understand Jesus?](http://www.lamblion.us/2010/08/quick-q-how-can-we-understand-jesus.html)

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Q) How do we make sense of some of the difficult teachings Jesus taught?

To answer this tough Bible question, Dr. David Reagan and I on a [Christ in Prophecy](#) television episode interviewed Dr. Ron Rhodes. Dr. Rhodes is the founder and director of [Reasoning From the Scriptures Ministries](#). With nearly 50 books penned and decades of public teaching, he is an expert on the Bible. As a former "Bible Answer Man," he specializes in easy to understand answers to the really tough questions about the Bible and the defense of the Scriptures.



Dr. Ron Rhodes - Apologist, Author, Speaker

Hate your family?

One teaching people question is, did Jesus advocate hating mother, father, spouse and children in [Luke 14:26](#)? Jesus said if you come to Him and you do not hate your mother, your father, your spouse and your children you could not be His disciple. That's a hard saying!

To answer that, we have to look at the context and understand that there are other verses that clear this up. For example, we know that Jesus in His perfection would never break one of the Ten Commandments, such as the Fifth Commandment to honor one's mother and father. Jesus taught in [Matthew 5:43-44](#) and [Luke 6:27,35](#) that we're supposed to love everyone, even our enemies.

So, what does Jesus mean when He says to hate your mother and father and your children and your spouse? Well, among the ancient Jews the word for hate according to ancient rabbinical writings could mean "to love less." And so, Jesus was saying that unless you love your spouse, and your parents, and your children less than Him, you could not be His disciple.

Now, the parallel verse in [Matthew 10:37](#) says that if you love your mother or your father more than Jesus then you are not worthy of Him. So, the key thing is to interpret words according to their proper context and their intended meaning.

Let the dead bury their own dead?

Another example of a puzzling statement of Jesus is in [Matthew 8:21-22](#) and [Luke 9:59-60](#) where Jesus was talking to a man to whom He was calling to enter into Christian service. The man responds by asking to bury his father first. Jesus then makes a peculiar statement, *"Let the dead bury their own dead."*

Let the dead bury the dead? Whoa, what's that about?! Does that mean that the dead are going to come up out of the grave and bury somebody else that's dead? How would that work? Well, as we look at the context everything gets a little bit more clearer. Apparently, this man was the only Christian in the family, and this man now that he'd become a Christian was being invited into missionary work with Jesus. So, Jesus tells him let the spiritually dead bury the physical dead.

A number of other scholars have pointed out that in this case it may well be that the father wasn't even dead yet, so the man might have been giving an excuse. I'd be like saying, "Let me wait a couple years until my father dies and I'll bury him and then I'll come and serve you."

Gentiles are dogs?

Another example has to do with the Phoenician woman of [Matthew 15:21-28](#) and [Mark 7:24-30](#). She is the one who Jesus told He'd come to the Jews and not to the Gentiles. She then replied that even the dogs get the children's crumbs off of the table. People appalled exclaim, "This is supposed to be a man of love and He speaks to her like this?!"

I look at that verse and to me what's going on is an illustration of the sense of humor that Jesus probably had. The ancient Jews did have this idea that the Gentiles were like dogs who you're not supposed to throw food to. You're supposed to give the food to your children. So, I can imagine Jesus having a little twinkle in His eye when he said to the woman, "Don't you know that I'm not supposed to give the dogs this?" We know this was Jesus' state of mind because He goes on to tell the woman that her faith was great and her request had been granted. Jesus was really doing a kind of little play on the pharisaic teachings.

Jesus did not come to abolish the Law?

Another hard teaching is [Matthew 5:17](#) where Jesus said, "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*" And yet, the book of Hebrews indicates that when Jesus died on the cross the Old Covenant was abolished and a New Covenant was instituted.

When we look at some of the ancient rabbinical writings, one thing that we come very clear upon is that the word "abolish" can mean "one who disobeys or does not have proper respect for the authority." Now, here's the thing, the Pharisees didn't think that Jesus was showing respect to the Law. The Jews thought that Jesus was in fact disobeying the Law. After all, Jesus was hanging around with sinners. He was doing these miracles on the Sabbath and so forth, and so they thought that Jesus was disrespecting the Law. But Jesus says He had not come to abolish the Law or disrespect the law, but had come to fulfill the Law. Jesus not only fulfilled the Law externally like the Pharisees did, but He also fulfilled it internally. Those Jews thought that as long as they did things externally they were okay. Jesus countered that the Law deals with the inner heart.

In terms of those verses which talk about the Old Covenant being passed away and the New Covenant coming into being, those have to do with the Cross and time after. The New Covenant was enacted and brought into being at the death of Christ. It's based upon the blood of Jesus. So, at that point in fact, the Law did pass away and we have a New Covenant which is based upon the forgiveness of sins provided by the death of Jesus Christ.

Nathan's IMHO

Our words condemn us?

Jesus stated in [Matthew 12:36-37](#), *"But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."*

The context of Matthew 12 would indicate that Jesus is speaking to unbelievers concerning the Great White Throne Judgment held at the end of Christ's Millennial Kingdom ([Rev. 20:11-15](#)). These unbelievers will be judged for their works, but since they have not accepted Christ's work of salvation, they will fall short of the glory of God and be sentenced to Hell.

God assures us in [Hebrews 8:12](#) and [10:17](#) that under the New Covenant of grace that by Jesus' death on the cross He will remember the believers' sins no more. Believers will be judged by our works at the Judgment of the Just just after the Rapture, but having already been given an eternity with God by Jesus, we are judged for our degree of rewards. Our words no longer condemn us, though the thoughts and motivations behind them might diminish our heavenly rewards.