

BIBLIOLOGY (73)

For example, the book of Matthew is a book specifically designed to present Jesus Christ as King of the Jews, who came specifically to the Jews to present the Kingdom and Himself to Israel. The book opens with Christ's Kingly lineage, clearly establishing Him as having Davidic royalty demanded of the Messiah (Matt. 1ff.). The entire book is about Jesus Christ presenting Himself and Kingdom to Israel, both messages of which Israel rejected. The message of Matthew is not "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," it is "repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." At the end of Matthew 23, Christ informs Israel that God's program will temporarily depart Israel until the entire nation rejoices over Christ's return (Matt. 23 :37-39). Shortly after Christ informed the nation that this would happen, the disciples were wondering when Christ would return and what the signs would be when He would come back and all of Israel would rejoice (Matt. 24:1-3). Christ gives several signs that will immediately precede Him coming as King of Israel to establish His Kingdom (Matt. 24:4-28). We learn from Matt. 24:29, that these are the signs that occur during the Tribulation period. It is amazing that several well meaning believers have never stopped to ask, "To whom was this text given?" Many automatically assume that this is a passage written to Christians that sets forth signs of the rapture. Neither the rapture, nor the N.T. Christian is any where in this passage and if a N.T. believer is looking for these signs, he is looking for the wrong things.

The student of the Bible is commanded to "study" to "rightly divide" God's word. In order to give an accurate interpretation of any passage, we must answer the basic question- "to whom was this passage originally written?"

Interpretive Principle #4 - We must keep in mind that each passage was written in a specific context.

A passage must be interpreted according to its context. It has been well said that "a text without a context is nothing but a pretext." In other words, any passage not interpreted in light of its context is done so out of false motives and false reasons. Cults are very skilled at taking verses out of context in order to promote their false interpretations. A good example is the 144,000 found in Revelation 7:4.

However, God's people must be very careful not to do the same kind of thing. For example, in the context we have just examined from Matthew, there are two verses which have often times been used to support the rapture of the Church (Matt. 24:40-41). If, however, we examine the context which promotes an endurance until the end (Matt. 24:13) and the preservation of Noah (Matt. 24:37-39), we must conclude that when these events happen the people who are right with God will be left and not taken. This text, in its context, is aimed at the nation Israel, and is designed to encourage her to stay faithful to God during the Tribulation (Matt. 24:29). After the Tribulation, Jesus Christ will return and remove the godless and will leave behind Israel so that she might enter her kingdom.

Those who disregard context, are those who neglect a true interpretation of the passage. Every passage must be interpreted in its context.

BIBLIOLOGY (74)

In looking at the context, there is an immediate context, which requires an examination of the words which directly precede and follow the passage to be interpreted. There is an intermediate context, which requires an examination of surrounding verses to discover particular themes and topics which relate to the whole. There is a broad context, which requires an examination of the book to determine its particular contribution to the "whole counsel of God."

The true interpretation of any passage must be consistent with the context, otherwise the interpretation is pretextual, not contextual.

Interpretive Principle #5 - We must keep in mind that each passage was written with specific words.

There is no getting around the fact that God used words to reveal Himself to mankind. As we have already seen, the Scriptures are inspired to the very word. This reality places a serious responsibility on the interpreter to carefully and accurately understand each word.

A word does not stand by itself. It is placed in a context with other words to form thoughts. Therefore it is **always** necessary to understand a particular meaning of a word in view of its context. Since some words may contain more than one meaning, it is imperative that an interpretation carefully examine surrounding words so that a true interpretation can be ascertained. When it comes to word interpretation, the key issue is **context, context, context!**

Interpretive Principle #6 - We must keep in mind that each passage was written in a specific grammatical structure.

To understand the true interpretation of the text, we must observe the true grammatical structure of that text. Words form clauses, which form sentences, which form paragraphs, which communicate thoughts. These words, clauses, sentences and paragraphs were Divinely inspired by God in order to communicate His revelation to us. God selected verb tenses and moods. God determines which clauses would be independent and which would be dependent. God determined which clauses would be coordinate and which would be subordinate. These are specific grammatical matters which were put into written form by God, Himself! For a true interpretation to be discovered, these grammatical matters **must** be considered. Many misinterpretations and misconceptions would be resolved if the interpreter were willing to carefully examine the grammatical structure.

One must certainly admit that the heaviest weight for this type of analysis falls upon the Pastor. It is his primary responsibility to "study to rightly divide" God's word. Although much information can be gained from some great tools, which are available today, without a good working knowledge of English, Greek and Hebrew, the Pastor/Teacher will find it very difficult to prepare an accurate Biblical exposition of a passage. Accurate interpretations and accurate conclusions come from an accurate understanding of the grammatical structure.

BIBLIOLOGY (75)

Without a good working knowledge of grammatical matters, accurate interpretations and expositional authority and precision will be greatly lacking.

Dr. Chafer wrote: "For this reason the study of both Hebrew and Greek to the extent that worthy exegesis in one's own right is undertaken, is most essential and belongs to the preparation of the Bible expositor. The history of great preachers and teachers of the past relative to the use of the original languages is most stimulating. Those who have not gained a working knowledge of the original languages can hardly be expected to realize what a wealth of disclosure that ability imparts." (Vol. 1, p.118)

Interpretive Principle #7 - We must keep in mind that each passage was written in view of other passages written on the same specific theme.

When God wrote His word and decided in a particular section of the Bible to develop a particular theme, He did so with the full knowledge that in other sections would be information pertaining to the same theme. Since God preserved His word, He naturally can assume that when studying a particular passage, other passages which pertain to the same theme may also be examined to form a proper interpretation. As Chafer said: "A right interpretation will also depend very largely on an induction being made of all that the Bible presents on a given subject. The conclusion must be no less than the consensus of that full testimony." (Vol. 1, pp.117-118)

For example, we certainly can see the importance of this matter when it comes to Biblical prophecy. In fact, we have a God given mandate to carefully examine all Scripture in understanding prophecy: "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation." (II Pet. 1:20). Certainly we may conclude that interpretation of prophecy must be made in view of and in harmony with all Scripture, which pertains to that subject. No one private passage should be used without examining all passages which pertain to that theme. The same is true with understanding "true/sound" doctrine. No doctrinal position should ever be based on a couple of private or isolated passages. The whole counsel of God must be examined in order to come to an accurate understanding and interpretation of God's word.

A good illustration of this very principle can be seen in attempting to interpret II Timothy 4:1-2. In these verses, Paul gives a very solemn charge to Timothy to preach God's word. One of the points Paul brings up in order to add serious weight to this charge is that this charge is being made in view of Christ's "appearing" and His "kingdom." In the original Greek text, both nouns "appearing" and "kingdom" have the article "the" before them. What this means is that Paul had two specific events in mind, both of which he expected Timothy to be able to identify. If we examine the Thessalonian letters, both of which name Timothy, and if we examine Paul's letter to the Corinthians, plus the book of Revelation, we may accurately interpret the charge as being made in view of Christ "appearing" to rapture His church and in view of Christ "returning" to establish His kingdom. These are two separate and distinct events, which truly add great weight to the charge to "Preach the Word." The "appearing" of Christ at the Rapture speaks of the

BIBLIOLOGY (76)

believer facing Christ for judgment for receiving or losing rewards. The coming of Christ for His kingdom speaks of reigning with Christ having received or lost rewards. In view of this context, Paul is telling Pastor Timothy that he wants him to preach God's word in view of the fact that He will see Jesus Christ, be judged by Jesus Christ and ultimately reign with Jesus Christ.

Apparently one of the critical issues which will determine our position for reigning with Jesus Christ will be how faithful we were to carry out this charge. By observing a simple article "the", by observing the context, and by comparing this prophetic passage with others, we can come to a true, accurate interpretation of precisely what Paul was saying to Timothy, namely the charge to Preach the Word is a very serious charge.

Interpretive Principle #8 - We must keep mind that each passage must be interpreted honestly.

It is very easy to find verses that conform to our way of thinking- all cults do this. It is very easy to, as Paul said, "adulterate the word of God" (II Cor. 4:2). It is very easy, but it is also very wrong. Our job is not to support our opinions or beliefs by citing a couple of verses, our job is to **accurately and honestly understand and communicate God's Word**.

We are sternly warned by God not to add to a text or take away from a text. We are challenged not to read things into a text that are not there. Our goal is to prayerfully and honestly understand God's precious word.

At no point should we be more honest than when it comes to a study of God's word. When faced with the Truth of God's word, which perhaps opposes our own preconceived prejudices, we should immediately toss aside our opinions and readily accept God's word. This is a major key to our own growth. Honesty and accuracy with God's word should be the hallmark of every believer.

If this hermeneutic principle were honestly applied, denominations would crumble and religious nonsense, perversion, misrepresentation and misinterpretation would cease. Unfortunately, many are not willing to honestly approach the Bible with a true desire of knowing God's word. Many are only interested in supporting their own distorted theology and beliefs.

Floyd H. Barackman, in his book, How To Interpret the Bible, lists eleven rules of interpretation to follow in every passage:

- 1) Interpret the passage according to its context.
- 2) Interpret the passage in light of all that the Bible teaches.
- 3) Understand the meaning of words in the passage. .
- 4) Interpret the passage according to its grammatical construction.
- 5) Interpret the passage in light of its background.
- 6) Recognize, identify and interpret any figurative expression in the passage.
- 7) Recognize and interpret any type in the passage.
- 8) Recognize and interpret any parable or allegory in the passage.