

Scriptures and Doctrine :: interpreting

interpreting, on: 2005/6/10 11:30

One thing that I have learned in life is that it is very easy to misinterpret the language and meanings of those not of our own culture. When I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Southern Africa in the early 1980's I learned the Sesotho language and doing so taught me a lot about interpretation. For instance, they had a completely different concept of time. If they said that they would be meeting you in a little while it might be tomorrow or sometime in the next week or so, and this was understood. Being a westerner brought up with a different concept of time when someone told me they would meet me at the credit union office (I work for the CU League) on Monday or in a little while I could show up and wait all day or more than a day for this person to show up and when they did, and I expressed some exasperation at having to wait for them for a day or more, they had no concept at all about why I would be upset. So, correct interpretation is completely dependent upon an understanding and knowledge of how a culture operates and what its understanding of the world is. This is the point I would bring up to all who interpret Genesis as a literal production. It was written in a culture that we don't really understand very well. It was written in a society that had no conception of the vastness of the universe, or that stars were other suns, or that the earth was round, etc. It is very understandable that they wrote the story as it appears today, with God creating for six days and then resting. And somehow much of it reflects the actual events that occurred in evolution. All the waters were gathered into one place. Early man was an herbivore. (I have gone into this before at length and won't repeat here.)

My point is that reading and interpreting Genesis and the Bible in general should be tempered with an understanding of what the culture of society understood at the time of the writings. Thus the Old Testament and New Testament should not be read and interpreted in the same ways because they came out of very distinct cultures. You can read Jesus' teachings more literally than the OT because the cultures from which the NT came from was vastly more knowledgeable and literate than in BC 4,000.

Bubbaguy

Re: interpreting - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/6/11 16:53

Jake/bubbaguy

Quote:
 -----This is the point I would bring up to all who interpret Genesis as a literal production. It was written in a culture that we don't really understand very well. It was written in a society that had no conception of the vastness of the universe, or that stars were other suns, or that the earth was round, etc. It is very understandable that they wrote the story as it appears today, with God creating for six days and then resting. And somehow much of it reflects the actual events that occurred in evolution. All the waters were gathered into one place. Early man was an herbivore. (I have gone into this before at length and won't repeat here.)

Paul

Quote:
 -----2Tim. 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Peter

Quote:
 -----"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2Pet. 1:20-21, KJV)

Christ

Quote:
 -----Matt. 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Quote:

-----John 10:35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

Re: interpreting, on: 2005/6/12 16:29

Quote:

-----It was written in a culture that we don't really understand very well. It was written in a society that had no conception of the vastness of the universe, or that stars were other suns, or that the earth was round, etc.

Your comments are pure conjecture.

This week on the radio in the UK, there is an item about the noises in space, which are able to be recorded now, support ing the first three verses of Psalm 19. How did they know there was noise in space? Is it possible the earth was so quiet, quite simply, they could hear them? If you are interested in listening to these sounds, the item was on (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/leadingedge.shtml>) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/leadingedge.shtml> The 'Listen again' facility is above the presenter's picture.

Also, might you have an explanation for the use of the word 'circuit' in the following verses?

Psalm 19

6 His going forth from the end of the heaven, and his **circuit** unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

Ecclesiastes 1

6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his **circuits**.

Re:, on: 2005/6/13 17:26

Ron, So, the reason you believe all scripture to be God given and inerrant is because scripture itself tells you so? No arguing against that one is there.

Scripture is the inspired word of God, but as recorded and translated by fallible man. We need to use the brains God gave us and our reasoning abilities, understanding of human cultures and the creation and science (evolving as it is) to interpret these scriptures and what they mean.

This is not to say that they are wrong or incorrect, but that they need to be understood and interpreted in context. And yes, of course, in prayer the Holy Spirit can provide profound insight into the interpreting.

Bubbaguy

Re: - posted by couch (), on: 2005/6/13 17:53

Yikes!

I'm honestly quite disturbed at this - brother I urge you to reconsider before the Lord the point you are making. I've watched too many friends recently fall into the traps of postmodern and "new kind of christian" teaching that demotes the word of God and elevates human ability to "reason, adapt, and figure" for himself how to apply things how he wishes.

My heart is grieved over this...

The human mind without God is as depraved as the human heart, and I pray watchfulness over all of our hearts that we would esteem God's word to be the infallible, inerrant, inspired, immutable, and indestructible words of life!

F B Meyer - posted by dohzman (), on: 2005/6/13 19:18

I posted this request here since I observed anything bubbaguys posts seems to get alot of.....activity...Does anyone know where I can find a copy of FB Meyers "Shepards Psalm" on the net in PDF? Would appreciate it---Bro. Daryl

Re: interpreting - posted by GaryE (), on: 2005/6/14 0:08

Dear Buggaguy,

Before coming to the Lord, all the brain washing about evolution in my past had convinced me that evolution was true. Once the Spirit bore witness to me that God is real and Jesus died for me, I had to reconsider that this foolish teaching of evolution is not of God.

Buggaguy, don't you think that maybe God created everything as Genesis states and in creating this he created a fossil record and carbon 14 time lines at the same time. Remember Adam was not created a baby but was created an adult man.

Buggaguy, consider that the Word says we walk by faith and not by sight. Shouldn't we believe his Word and not the things we see or that are explained by some unbeliever.

Buggaguy, I realize that you are most likely a believer. By not taking a book that Jesus used as an illustration when speaking about Noah, you are walking a fine line that falls into doubt and unbelief. These are the very thoughts that we are to cast down.

In Christ,
GaryE

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/6/14 4:06

Quote:
-----Ron, So, the reason you believe all scripture to be God given and inerrant is because scripture itself tells you so? No arguing against that one is there.

And the reason you believe bits of it is because your reason tells you so? This has been our point of contention in every posting. Your reason eliminates Paul, Revelation, and every part that does not fit into your preconceptions.

Re: Revelation, interpretation, on: 2005/6/14 10:10

Ron, At a conference recently a colleague said that "Armagedon Christians" are some of the most dangerous and uncaring people on the planet. Working against the Palestinian people, promoting holy war in the mideast. Their interpretation of the Bible as inerrant leads them to their position which is that the end times are near and they are actually trying to hasten the end, which is no less than incitement for world war. This is decidedly anti Christian, but its what you get if you hold to an inerrant Bible.

Bub

Re:, on: 2005/6/14 11:21

Quote:
-----but its what you get if you hold to an inerrant Bible

Or, it's what you get from people who misread it?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/6/14 14:00

Jake/bubbaguy

You ought to know by know that I would share very few opinions with your 'Armagedon Christians'. As Dorcas has said t his has nothing to do with 'inerrancy' but everything to do with 'interpretation'. I have never believed in human infallibility which is why I distrust your 'inner witness' when it goes against God's biblical revelation. If I was looking for 'human infal libility' I would be unlikely to be searching for it among pseudo-Quakers.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/6/15 4:18

Jake/Bubbaguy

I have a question for you. If your inner witness were wrong, how would you know? I suspect I know the answer; the com munity. So I will widen the question; if their inner witness were wrong, how would they know?

Re:, on: 2005/6/15 15:28

Ron,

I would know that my inner witness was wrong if it ever told me to do something contrary to the teachings of Christ Jesu s.

Bub

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/6/15 15:48

Quote:

-----I would know that my inner witness was wrong if it ever told me to do something contrary to the teachings of Christ Jesus.

How would you know what they were? Serious question, not a cheap jibe!

Re:, on: 2005/6/15 16:39

Ron, If you read the original post, you would know my answer already.

"You can read Jesus' teachings more literally than the OT because the cultures from which the NT came from was vastly more knowledgeable and literate than in BC 4,000."

I don't buy your all or nothing approach to interpreting the Bible and you've known this for a long time. Why do you persi st in trying to misrepresent and mischaracterize what I believe?

Bubbaguy

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/6/15 17:54

Quote:

-----I don't buy your all or nothing approach to interpreting the Bible and you've known this for a long time. Why do you persist in trying t o misrepresent and mischaracterize what I believe?

I have never and never will 'try to misrepresent or mischaracterize' what you believe. My conscience would not allow be to do so. I only endeavour to make clear where your perceptions are coming from. My point in the last post was simply that you would have no teaching of Jesus to believe in if it were not for the men who wrote it. You pick and choose wher e it suits your preconceptions. Your beliefs are not based on the scriptures but on your reason supported by the scriptur es. Your position is fundamentally different to almost everyone on the site. New folk are always arriving who may not s ee where your views are coming from; I will do my best to enlighten them.

Let me give you a public warning that if you persist in your private offensive emails to me I will publish them on site, so t hat people can see the real nature of your reactions.

Re:, on: 2005/6/20 16:26

"New folk are always arriving who may not see where your views are coming from; I will do my best to enlighten them.

Let me give you a public warning that if you persist in your private offensive emails to me I will publish them on site, so that people can see the real nature of your reactions."

Ron, I wish you would let me speak for myself and not interpret what I post for others. Next, I have intended no offense, I simply want to discuss issues. That you find my beliefs "fundamentally different" is the whole point of discussion. Seems like you are looking for ditto, and are not interested in an honest debate. Then, threatening to post private messages is highly questionable from an ethical point of view. Don't you see this?????

Yes, I believe in evolution and do not interpret Genesis literally. Next, I have great difficulty with the writings of Paul because the man was a murdering, torturing thug before he had his experience on the road to Damascus. How many other murdering torturing thugs do you take spiritual advice and counsel from????? The man did accomplish much in spreading the Gospel, it's just that everything he preached and wrote was from the perspective of great guilt. It needs to be held in the proper light.

Then Revelations is an indecipherable mess of highly symbolic language. It is being widely used to justify end timers seeking to bring about armagedon. And what does it add to the teachings of Christ Jesus? What does it profit us to include it? Zip. We already know the Gospels, what more do we need?

Bubbaguy

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/6/20 17:41

Jake writes

Quote:
-----Next, I have great difficulty with the writings of Paul because the man was a murdering, torturing thug before he had his experience on the road to Damascus. How many other murdering torturing thugs do you take spiritual advice and counsel from?????

I don't take spiritual advice and counsel from any 'murdering, torturing thugs' but I do submit to Â"... our beloved brother Paul (who) also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in the m of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.Â"
(2Pet. 3:15-16, KJVS)Peter recognized that Paul had been given 'wisdom' and that Paul's writings were to be equated with 'the other scriptures'; in other words Paul's writings were scripture.

By the way, how do you know that he was a 'murdering, torturing thug'? By reading the Acts of the Apostles which also tell of his transformation in Christ. So you accept the testimony of the Acts as regards what he was but not what he became. It is this kind of inconsistency which makes your position wholly untenable. Do you read Acts with a blue censoring pencil in hand?

I now seriously doubt that you have had any real encounter with the risen Christ at all. One indelible characteristic of such is that they know they were capable of anything that Paul did and that Christ's power to forgive and renew which has transformed them also transformed Paul. If God had worked this miracle in you, you would have no difficulty in believing God could do it in Paul.

Paget Wilkes wrote that true Christian character was based on three responses; gratefulness to God, humility towards self, and generosity to others. All three, he said, were based on a deep personal experience of God's forgiveness. I know that I could have done anything that Paul or Hitler or Stalin did. The evil that was in them was not worse than that which was in me; I only lacked opportunity. Because I know God has forgiven and cleansed me from my own murderous thoughts and spirit; I have no difficulty in being generous to 'forgiven murderers' and have met more than one or two. I have enjoyed with them the sweet fellowship of 'forgiven sinners' and 'men and women made new in the power of God's Spirit'.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2005/6/20 17:42

I want to note something about the book of REValation

Rev 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Seems to me the disciple whom Jesus loved understood it to be pretty important, it's the only book written that offers the reader direct blessings for reading it.

Re: interpreting - re Bubba, on: 2005/6/20 22:17

Quote:

-----How many other murdering torturing thugs do you take spiritual advice and counsel from?????

In a similar, but different response to philologos, my experience of trying to forgive is that it is very difficult until one has been forgiven.

There is also the small matter of Romans 2 which is dear to my own heart and before which I stood condemned through judging others for sins I committed myself.

1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

So Bubba, are you offering spiritual advice from this unsteady platform? ... Just a thought.

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

Re: - posted by ravin, on: 2005/6/20 22:59

by couch on 2005/6/13 14:53:27

"I've watched too many friends recently fall into the traps of postmodern and "new kind of christian" teaching that demotes the word of God and elevates human ability to "reason, adapt, and figure" for himself how to apply things how he wishes."

Amen that's why we are where we are, not listening to the word of God. "But from the tree...thou shalt not eat" first listening to the devil twist God's words around. and Adam standing by letting the salesman sell a bill of goods to the woman of his castle, and not standing up for what God had given him.

Re:, on: 2005/6/21 12:16

I think you are misunderstanding what I wrote about Paul. I have no doubt that he was transformed through the forgiveness of Christ. It's just that I believe that, because of his past, he had an agenda and a bias that went beyond that of Christ.

Bubbaguy

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/6/21 18:11

Quote:

-----Its just that I believe that, because of his past, he had an agenda and a bias that went beyond that of Christ.

OK, so now we have Peter's opinion and yours. Guess which one I'm going to go with?

Re: interpreting, on: 2005/6/21 18:33

Bubba

Quote:

-----Its just that I believe that, because of his past, he had an agenda

Have you ever noticed, so did God, here:

Acts 9:16

For I will shew him how **great things he must suffer for my name's sake.**

Quote:

-----and a bias that went beyond that of Christ.

Apart from your personal opinion, do you choose a few scriptures to back up what you mean in this last part of your statement?

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2005/6/21 22:21

I can understand how one can make a natural rational conclusion in Paul's writings, however, his writings are numerically perfect along with the OT and the odds of that are like 10 billion to 1? Definitely divine in origin.

Re:, on: 2005/6/22 15:58

Here's a couple of examples:

Jesus of Nazareth strongly focused on women and the social status of women, but Paul was reactionary against Jesus' radicalism towards women. He demanded that women be silent in church and in matters of theology, thus re-establishing a gendered difference that Jesus had in part erased.

While Jesus of Nazareth has absolutely nothing to say about slavery—^{even though it was a common practice}—Paul seems to approve of it. In fact, he demands that slaves obey their masters.

Bub

Re: - posted by ravin, on: 2005/6/22 16:24

He came to set the captive free. Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, Paul was filled with Christ.
scripture must be read with understanding.

Look for Christ you'll find him in the word, he is the word. Jesus had all the time in his ministry to put a woman in as disciple, but he did the will of the father. There are 12 tribes, Jacob had daughters yet it was the son's that were leaders. Jesus had many women followers yet he sent out 12 then 70 to witness to the world, they were men.

I can write all day about it, but until the Holy Spirit opens one's eyes to the word and its knowledge of how it fits together, I'm just writing words.

That is why we have so many churches. Stand on the whole counsel of God.

Truth must not be based on what is happening in our cultural consensus, but on the word of the revealed mind of God the Father.

Re: interpreting - re Bubba, on: 2005/6/22 18:05

'Jesus of Nazareth strongly focused on women'

This is an overstatement. If you count references, you will find He is quoted as having said 'man' more often than 'woman' and I don't mean 51/49, and that's before counting all the times He referred to a man by name. Some women would call this *not* equal enough.

'and the social status of women,'

Where is the social status of any woman to whom Jesus spoke or referred, mentioned by Jesus?

'but Paul was reactionary against Jesus' radicalism towards women.'

Again, this is hard to justify from an analysis of scripture's record of either Paul's or Jesus's dealings with women. But, there is a possibility that the reader who is not used to giving women a fair place in their thinking, will be struck by the equality shown to women in the Bible.

'He demanded that women be silent in church'

The gospel and Christianity brought a radical change to the social status of women within marriage and society. Now they were expected to hear and understand the gospel and listen to the teaching for themselves, or so it has been explained to me.

'and in matters of theology,'

But to ask questions at home and not to teach the men. That they received the gifts in the same way men did, may have been as radical as the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit, the same way the Jews did. This is where the status of slave and master, is also singled out for a mention, seeing that *in the Lord* they were all equal with each other, despite outward divisions - such as nationality, gender or employment status.

'thus re-establishing a gendered difference that Jesus had in part erased'

Jesus had not 'in part erased' any gender difference. If you think He had, you are confusing equality of treatment by Him and opportunity to know Him, with a kind of modern 'unisex' thinking which has always been far from scripture and was *never* undermined by Jesus.

'While Jesus of Nazareth has absolutely nothing to say about slavery—*even though it was a common practice*—Paul seems to approve of it. In fact, he demands that slaves obey their masters.'

Jesus had been sent with a new message about the nearness of the kingdom of heaven and the imminence of the kingdom of God, not to rehash the state of the nation in terms of the Law - and yet, in many ways He did just that.

He left the apostles to offer practical advice on how men and women might adjust their attitudes, to show forth His glory after they were born again and baptised in the Spirit.

There were many things Jesus did not comment on during His earthly ministry, but I believe He did mention slaves, (captives) here:

Luke 4

18 The Spirit of the Lord upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20 And he closed the book, and he gave again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

The alternative to slavery was worse than slavery. If you read the reasons for and rights of slaves, including that of NOT LEAVING when they were FREE to do so, you will see Paul had to accept their existence, rather as we accept certain less than desirable financial arrangements on other matters, such as the use of the mortgage for the purchase of property.

There are other mentions of 'captive' in the New Testament too, the most notable being

Ephesians 4

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

This is a vital statement - fulfilment of prophecy attributed to Jesus - in which the kind of slavery which really matters - slavery to sin - has been addressed successfully through His death and resurrection. This remains the only type of slavery from which a person really needs to be set free, regardless of outward circumstances.

Do you ever read scripture with the attitude that here is something **good** to get your teeth into, and allow your spirit to be fed with the word of Life?