

Bible Study for Every Christian

Part 5: Interpretation

BIBLE STUDY FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN (PT. 5) Interpretation



TRENT ON PRIVATE INTERPRETATION

- Council of Trent: "To check unbridled spirits it [this council] decrees that no one, relying on his own judgment shall in matters of faith and morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, distorting the Holy Scriptures in accordance with his own conceptions, presume to interpret them contrary to that sense which Holy Mother Church to whom it belongs to judge of their true sense and interpretation has held or holds or even contrary to the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, even though such interpretations should never at any time be published."

REFORMERS ON PRIVATE INTERPRETATION

- Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms (1521): "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.... Here I stand. God help me!"

ARGUMENTS FOR PRIVATE INTERPRETATION

- **1)** The obligations for faith and obedience are personal, and judgment will be personal.
 - Ps. 1:2, 6; Ezek. 18:1-4; Matt. 22:29
 - Cf. Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:14—have you not read?
- **2)** The Scripture is almost always addressed to the people and not merely to the leadership.
 - The prophets constantly said: "Hear, O Israel!" or "Listen, all you people."
 - Christ taught the multitudes.
 - Most of the epistles of the NT were addressed to the congregation.

ARGUMENTS FOR PRIVATE INTERPRETATION

- **3)** People are called upon to study the Scripture personally and to teach it to their children. (Deut. 6:6-9; Ps. 19:7; 119:30; John 5:39).
- **4)** People are called upon and praised for evaluating what they hear taught against the teaching of Scripture.
 - Deut. 13:1-3
 - Acts 17:11
 - Gal. 1:8-9
 - 2 Cor. 4:1-2

THE PROCESS OF INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY



- **1)** Preparation
- **2)** Observation
- **3)** Meditation
- **4)** Interpretation
- **5)** Evaluation
- **6)** Application

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I. THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERPRETATION

- Only the true meaning of the passage is in fact the Word of God.
- Cf. 2 Pet. 3:15-16 - just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶ as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

II. THE MEANING OF INTERPRETATION

- **Definition:** Interpretation is the proper use of generally accepted principles to determine the one, divinely-intended meaning of the passage.

III. THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

- Recommended resources...
 - 1) *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* by Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart.
 - 2) *Knowing Scripture* by R.C. Sproul.
 - 3) *Hermeneutics* by Henry Virkler.
 - 4) *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* by Bernard Ramm.



THREE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

- **A. Interpret based on authorial intent.**
 - Matt. 22:29 - Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God."
 - John 5:39 - "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;"
 - 2 Pet. 3:15-16 - regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

THREE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

- **B. Interpret Scripture with Scripture.**
 - "The Analogy of faith"
 - "Scripture interprets Scripture."
 - 1st occurrence = the total Scripture.
 - 2nd occurrence = any part of Scripture, such as a verse or passage.
 - Restated the principle is: The entire Scripture is the context and guide for understanding any particular passage of Scripture.

THREE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

- **B. Interpret Scripture with Scripture.**
 - 2 Tim. 3:16 - All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
 - 1 Cor. 2:10-13; 2 Pet. 1:20-21
 - Implications...
 - 1) Don't interpret a text in isolation from rest of Scripture.
 - 2) The clear should interpret the obscure.

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THREE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

- **C. Interpret literally.**
 - The grammatical-historical method
 - As with other literature, we must interpret the Bible in the simplest, most literal sense, unless there is indication in the context not to do so.
 - Implications...
 - 1) Context rules.
 - 2) Pay attention to the words, syntax, culture, and history.
 - 3) Pay attention to genres (Fee & Stuart)

GENRES OF SCRIPTURE



- a) Law
- b) Narrative
- c) Poetry
- d) Proverbs
- e) Prophecy
- f) Parables
- g) Epistles

THREE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

- **1) Interpret based on authorial intent.**
- **2) Interpret Scripture with Scripture.**
- **3) Interpret literally.**



IV. THE DANGERS OF INTERPRETATION

- 1) Allegorizing
- 2) Spiritualizing or moralizing
- 3) Proof-texting
- 4) Using a narrative as normative
- 5) "Nationalizing"
- 6) Cultural back-loading
- 7) Literalizing
- 8) Dogmatizing

