

Lesson 2 Notes – 01/17/2008

THE GOAL OF INTERPRETATION:

Misunderstandings about the meaning of the Bible

1. A volume of mysteries with here and there a few clear statements of truth and duty
2. Only scholars and theologians are competent to understand it
3. It means different things to different people
4. It is filled with secret codes, numerology, and other secrets only a select few can discover

The truth about the Bible

1. God gave his revelation to ordinary men who then delivered it to ordinary people
2. Jesus did not depend on the Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, lawyers, and teachers of the law (experts all) to deliver his message to the masses of Israel
3. Each ordinary human communication, oral or written, has essentially just one meaning - a meaning which the speaker is trying hard to make clear. Why would God's message be any different?

The Goal of Biblical Interpretation

1. "First, if a passage does not possess a meaning (singular) but *many* meanings (plural), then the Bible cannot serve as a reliable source of stable truth." *Building Blocks for Bible Study*, (BBBS) page 12.
2. "Second, if there are as many *meanings* in the passage as there are readers, then *meaning* is determined by the reader or receiver of the text, and not by the author or sender." BBBS page 12.
3. The primary goal of our Bible study is to ascertain the **Author's Intended Meaning** (A.I.M.).
4. With the Bible this would mean both the human author and the divine author (God through the Holy Spirit).

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING OUR GOAL:

1. **Linguistic** - Bible originally written in Hebrew and Greek. We speak English. Further this was the Hebrew language of 2,000 - 3,000 years ago; the Greek was the language of 2,000 years ago. Neither are very close to modern Hebrew and Greek.
2. **Historical** - events going on in the world of the Biblical authors which affected their writings. . . events we may not know about.
3. **Cultural** - how people viewed the world around them (worldview), their ethnic and national beliefs and practices, and personal habits, were very different than ours.
4. **Geographical** - nations, landscapes, landmarks, natural geographical features - none familiar to us.
5. **Time** - the greater the time gap between our present time and any event in the past, the more difficult to know about it, as evidence and eyewitnesses are lost.

6. **Documentary** - in the case of written communication, especially of significant documents from the past, the originals are often lost and only copies remain. Examples include the Gettysburg Address and Magna Carta.
7. **Our Own Limitations:**
 - a. Preconceived ideas and a presumption that we already know the facts
 - b. Many of us are not informed, critical readers. We struggle with understanding literary genres, following an author's logic, and fail to ask for vital evidence to establish the truth of claims.

OUR PROPOSED METHOD OF RESEARCH:

1. One designed to overcome the barriers listed above while fully considering the circumstances and purposes of the authors of the sacred writings.
2. Examine each writing and passage in light of four criteria:
 - a. **Background** - historical, cultural, the author, his audience
 - b. **Context** - the text taken as a whole with any stated or implied reasons for its composition. The literary genre of the document. Its arrangement and plan
 - c. **Grammar and Structure** - logic, figures of speech and more
 - d. **Words** - the building blocks for communicating thought
3. The reference works, principles of interpretation, and exercises we will use are all designed to make it much more possible to discover the author's original meaning.

Effective Bible Study

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