

You see, the Christian faith is based upon historical fact, it rests, for instance on the historical Jesus and not just some story! Let me give you an example so you can see what I mean. When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, he was writing to a group of people that were living in a very immoral society and some of that came into the church and Paul was correcting them on this.

To understand what was going on in Corinth at that time helps us to understand why Paul said what he did! Yes, we can take what Paul wrote and apply it to our day but don't forget that letter was written to the Corinthian church even though it has a spiritual application for us! So looking at the historical background is important for us to understand what was happening then. After we do this we can make the spiritual application because the Holy Spirit wrote this through Paul and the other writers of the Bible with all of us in mind. He can illuminate it for us. Historical background, don't lose sight of it!

#### **E. INTERPRET WITH A CONNECTION TO OUR FAITH**

The next one is simple; we need to interpret the Scriptures with a connection or correlation to our faith. In other words, the Bible does not contradict itself. If you read in the letters of Paul that our salvation is based on grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, that is clear. But, when you read the letter of James it seems to be saying that we are saved by works and not by faith. So who is right? Is this a contradiction in the Bible, a big one?

No not at all. Paul is speaking of the means of our salvation, that it is based in grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone. While James is writing about how we live out our faith, that our faith is not dead but it is active. You see, James is not contradicting what Paul has said, he is expounding on it and making it applicable to our faith, how we live out our faith!

Here's the thing. If one portion of Scripture seems to contradict another, the problem is not the Bible but the interpreter! And I truly believe as you read the Bible, as you pray and ask the Holy Spirit to open a passage up to you, He will help you to interpret it correctly. You see, if God wrote these words for us, or more correctly breathed them out to us, then God cannot lie and thus, what He has said is true and He will not contradict Himself!

#### **F. DEPENDENCE UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The last one we will look at is our dependence upon the Holy Spirit and we touched on this one briefly with our last section. If you try to approach the Scriptures with the wisdom of man, your intellect, then that is what you will get out of it, man's wisdom, which is nothing compared to our all knowing God! I realize that some have a hard time with this because we think we can figure it out, but we can't.

Listen to what Jesus said in John 16:12-15, **"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you."**

Listen carefully to what Jesus is saying here. First of all these men were going to need further instructions; they were not ready for all that Jesus had for them at this time. But when the Holy Spirit comes, He will teach them all truth, He will give to them the things that they will need, and He continues to teach us today! He gives to us all truth and where is truth found? It is found in the Word of God and it is the Holy Spirit that not only illuminates the Word of God to us but also interprets it for us!

And notice the function of the Holy Spirit, to reveal Jesus to us and that is done through the Word of God, the exercise of the gifts, and so on. The truth tester is simple, does it agree with God's Word and is it revealing Jesus to us! That is the work of the Holy Spirit! In other words, it is the Holy Spirit's function to throw light upon the Word of God so that the believer can understand the meaning that is intended and then we can act upon it. Faith put into action!

I believe the Scriptures are very clear on this. To fully understand the Word of God it is going to be impossible without the prayerful dependence upon the Spirit of God. And think about this for a minute. He is the one who inspired the Word and thus, He is the supreme interpreter!

Now in saying that let me also make these couple of points. First of all, the Holy Spirit is not going to guide us into interpretations that contradict each other or fail to have a logical consistency to them. Secondly, the Holy Spirit is not going to give us new doctrine that is not already contained in the Word of God.

In other words, the Holy Spirit makes us wise in what is written and not beyond what is written! The Holy Spirit does not communicate to us new truth but illuminates what is revealed in the Scripture already! I hope that is clear! And thus, we need to have a dependence upon the Holy Spirit as we interpret the Scriptures!

This truly sums up what we have in our hands, the Word of God, as one writer wrote,

"This Book is the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding; its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's character. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. Follow its precepts and it will lead you to Calvary, to the empty tomb, to a resurrected life in Christ; yes, to glory itself, for eternity." - Source Unknown

May we treasure these Words of God that He has written to us! God's Word is a **REVELATION** to us in who God is! God's Word is **INSPIRED** or given to us from the very breath of God! And as we have seen, God's Word is **INERRANT** in the original manuscripts and the copies we have today can be trusted. There is **ILLUMINATION** which sheds the light on the Scriptures and **INTERPRETATION** which speaks of understanding the meaning of Scripture.

# What the Bible says about . . . The Bible Part 1

Today there is an attack against the authority of God's Word. Listen to the warning that Harold Lindsell gave us way back in 1976 and when you listen to what he has to say, you will see how far people have moved away from God's Word. He wrote,

"I shall argue that once infallibility is abandoned, however good the intentions of those who do it and however good they feel their reasons for doing so, it always and ever opens the door to further departures from the faith. Once errancy enters an institution, it does not simply become one of several options. It quickly becomes the regnant [reigning] view and infallibility loses its foothold and at last is silenced effectively. When one surveys the current scene in places where errancy has gotten a grip, it soon becomes obvious that there are few champions of inerrancy ready or willing to challenge the new reality."

He goes on to say,

"I will contend that embracing a doctrine of an errant Scripture will lead to disaster down the road. . . . it will lull congregations to sleep and undermine their belief in the full-orbed truth of the Bible, it will produce spiritual sloth and decay; and it will finally lead to apostasy. No one should forget that the clearest example of this is the Unitarian Universalist denomination . . . In turning away from Trinitarianism, this group of people turned away from the clear teaching of the Bible.

Underlying their departure from orthodoxy was their disbelief in the infallibility of Scripture. In the early nineteenth century the difference between the Unitarians and the orthodox did not seem so great. But today the chasm is vast. Many Unitarians are atheists; many are humanists. In both the first and the second Humanist Manifestos the names of Unitarian clergymen are prominent. Among Unitarian Universalists the doctrine of sin has disappeared. The gospel is not preached. No missionaries go to the ends of the earth with the good news of Christ's salvation. Nor is the Bible preached in their churches. This group is utterly and completely apostate. No other conclusion is possible."

- Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Truth, p. 25-26

We truly are in a battle for the truth of God's Word today. Let's take a look and see what we have in our hands and what the Bible has to say about itself.



## **BIBLIOLOGY: THE BIBLE**

When we speak of Bibliology it is referring to the study of the nature of the Bible and it includes such topics as Revelation, Inspiration, Inerrancy, Illumination and Interpretation. We are going to look at these topics so we can understand what they mean.

### **1. REVELATION**

The word "revelation" comes from the Greek word, APOKALUPSIS, (ap-ok-al'-opp-sis) and it speaks of unveiling or uncovering something. Biblically speaking it is the act and process whereby God makes Himself known to us. There is general revelation (We see this in Psalm 19:1-6) where we can see God through nature, we can see His handiwork, that there is a Creator, there is a Designer, there is a God. But natural revelation is limited because it can't tell us who God is and what He desires of us.

Then there is special revelation (We see this in Psalm 19:7-14) where God speaks to us through His Word. He tells us who He is and He tells us where we stand and what we need to do. It gives to us everything to live lives that are pleasing to Him and to have fellowship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ!

### **2. INSPIRATION**

I think Dr. Norman Geisler gives us a very good definition of what inspiration is all about. He wrote,

"Inspiration is the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, who through the different personalities and literary styles of the chosen human authors invested the very words of the original books of the Holy Scripture, alone and in their entirety, as the very Word of God without error in all that they teach or imply (including history and science), and the Bible is thereby the infallible rule and final authority for faith and practice of all believers."

- Dr. Norman Geisler, Systematic Theology Volume One, Introduction/Bible, p. 241

And listen to what the Bible has to say in II Timothy 3:16 which tell us, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.**"

The Greek word for, "**given by inspiration of God**" or "**God-breathed**" is THEOPNEUSTOS and it is a combination of two Greek words. The first is THEOS which is God and PNUE which is breath. And thus, like The New International Version tells us, it means "**God-breathed**."

Now, let's take what is spoken here and compare it with what we are told in Psalm 33:6, which reads, "**By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.**" I want you to listen carefully to this, it is important. Just as God spoken the universe into existence, He breathed it into existence you might say, God also breathed into existence His Word, the Bible!

### **3. INERRANCY**

The next word that we will be looking at this morning is "**inerrancy**" and this is one that many struggle with and thus, it is important for us to understand what this word means. In other words, is the Bible without error in the original manuscripts? I believe it is or we have a huge problem. You see, if you can't trust the Bible in one area then how can you trust it at all?

These 66 books are without error in their original manuscripts and what we have today is very accurate, there are no major doctrinal changes in the manuscripts that have been found and we will look at that more as we look at the texts of the New

Testament and the Old Testament!

It is as Proverbs 30:5-6 tell us, "**Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.**" Don't mess with His Word, but apply it to your life. You see, the Bible is the sole authority in matters of belief and practice!

### **4. ILLUMINATION**

Now when we speak of illumination we are speaking of what the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives as we read and hear the Word of God. It is one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Word of God to us. And thus, this word can be defined like this. Illumination is that which happens when a truth of Scripture is made understandable by the Holy Spirit to the individual. In other words, it is the proper interpretation of the Scriptures as the Holy Spirit shines His light upon it.

### **5. INTERPRETATION**

When we are talking about interpretation we are speaking of the correct understanding of the Scriptures, the correct meaning of what God is saying to us. Illumination sheds the light on the Scriptures and applying it to our lives. When we speak of interpretation we are talking about the reader seeking to understand the meaning of Scripture. In other words, when we read a biblical story, we need to understand the context of that passage and then, out of that the Holy Spirit opens it up or enlightens us to the application, which is the illumination part. Both illumination and interpretation are closely related.

Now when we speak of interpretation many disregard any rules and just make the Bible say what they want instead of what it really says, what God is saying to us! Let me give you some rules to follow as you read God's Word.

## **SIX RULES FOR BIBLE INTERPRETATION**

### **A. DEFINITION**

When I speak of definition I am talking about what the word means. And this can be a little tricky because the Greek language has more words than our English language. For instance we have one word for "love" in the English language while in Greek there are at least three and they are each specific and not general as we see with our word.

Now don't let this scare you because for the most part, words have a limited meaning. For instance, if you come across the word "mountain" in the Bible it is not going to mean a tree or bird or fish, it is some geographical mound or hill. Using a dictionary or Greek/English lexicon may help us to understand words like "love" and their meaning.

And don't come to the conclusion that everything is an allegory or a metaphor because then you start taking away the events that have occurred, they are a fairy tale to expound on some kind of spiritual truth. No, the Bible is very clear when it is using allegories or stories to show something, but the majority of the Bible is to be taken literally except when the passage is using a metaphorical language. Think of it like this, "If the literal sense makes sense, seek no other sense." I like that and it is a good way to remember this one, definition!

### **B. USAGE**

Who was the Bible written to? Yes, all of mankind but specifically, the Old Testament was written by Jews to the Jewish people and thus, to understand it you have to understand the usage or practice or customs of the Jewish people. You can't approach the Scriptures with a western mindset because you will come up with the wrong interpretation. Look at the Feasts of Israel and as you understand what they were about you will have a better picture of Christ and the work He came to do. Look at the Tabernacle and its furnishings and as you do you will have another beautiful picture of Christ and the work He came to do. You see, you can't separate the Scriptures from its Jewish roots or you will miss what they are trying to say! Usage is important, the customs, the practices of the people that the Lord wrote to and through!

Many of the New Testament writings are letters to churches, communities or people and thus, we must read them in light of that also.

### **C. CONTEXT**

When you buy a house the key to selling it is, "Location, location, location!" Well, when it comes to interpreting Scripture it all boils down to this, "Context, context, context!" In other words, every word you read must be understood in light of the words that come before and after it. If you don't look at the context you can come to a faulty or wrong conclusion and sadly, many do this to prove their point, but that does not make them right because what they are saying was taken out of context!

One person put it like this, "Seeking the biblical author's intended meaning necessitates interpreting Bible verses in context. Every word in the Bible is part of a verse, and every verse is part of a paragraph, and every paragraph is part of a book, and every book is part of the whole of Scripture. No verse of Scripture can be divorced from the verses around it. Interpreting a verse apart from its context is like trying to analyze a Rembrandt painting by looking at only a single square inch of the painting. The context is absolutely critical to properly interpreting Bible verses."

A good rule to follow is this, "A text without a context is only a pretext." In other words, it is speaking of a false reason or motive put forth to hide the real one! And thus, it is impossible to understand any statement without considering its context!

Also, we must keep in mind that the interpretation of a specific passage must not contradict the total teaching of Scripture on a point. Individual verses do not exist as isolated fragments, but as parts of a whole. The exposition of these verses, therefore, must involve exhibiting them in right relation both to the whole and to each other. Scripture interprets Scripture. Thus, **CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT!**

### **D. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

This one also can go along the lines of context and that is the historical background of what you are reading. In other words, you have to have some awareness, some knowledge of life during that period of time in which it was written. That is not to say when the Bible speaks of scientific things it will be wrong, but understand the culture of the day, that is important! And yes, the spiritual principle will be timeless and is timeless, but don't negate the background in which it was written.