

# **Bible is God's Word 4**

## *The Hermeneutics of Interpretation*

(preached 10/31/21)

Please turn to 2 Timothy 2:15

## ***Happy Reformation Day!***

### LAST WEEK:

- When Jesus ascended to Heaven He didn't leave us alone! WE'RE NOT ON OUR OWN!
- He sent the Holy Spirit Who is our Advocate, Counselor, Teacher & Comforter.
- Jesus said the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to teach us the Truth, to bring everything Jesus said to our minds, and to declare what belongs to Jesus to us and through us.
- We can only understand and live out what's written in the Bible when He is our Teacher, sitting next to us and opening our minds to get it.
- Unbelievers cannot understand the Scriptures no matter how smart or poetic they are, because they don't have God's Spirit in them.
- When we're truly following God's Spirit we'll have good doctrine AND good fruit...we're less likely to be condescending know it all's.
- Jesus has never lost a battle, argument, or anything! If He sent a plan or intention in motion, it came about exactly the way He wanted! Nothing comes along to throw a monkey wrench into Jesus' plans.
- The same Jesus, 100% victorious Jesus, lives in us in the form the HS!

TODAY we discuss rubber-hits-the-road methods of reading and interpreting Scripture which, when used, will help us to avoid pitfalls. Before I begin, let me make a few statements:

- **DISAGREEMENT.** *Despite the aid of the Holy Spirit and the Hermeneutical method, Christians don't completely agree on everything.*
- We still disagree and even quibble over doctrine and theology, even within the same church.
- Where should we draw the line? In my view: I will still consider someone a bro or sis in Christ as long as they believe in things essential like Jesus as the Son of God and only Savior to mankind, and the Bible as being God's Word.
- I know plenty of Christians and Pastors who disagree with me over the timing of the Rapture, whether the Spirit Gifts still operate today, whether the office of Apostle & Prophet are still active, and the doctrines of predestination and election.
- I may get into heated debates with them over these things, but they remain brothers and sisters in Christ whom I love and will still have fellowship with.

- If someone denies the deity of Jesus, the Trinity, the effectiveness of His Blood sacrifice, or authority of the Bible and refuses instruction and correction, I will back off from having fellowship with them.
- WE'LL MESS UP. Even when we strive for accuracy and truth, we're still going to mess it up.
- We'll eisegetically insert our own biases, desires, emotions, and conclusions into Scripture. We'll miss and overlook something.
- We'll neglect the Spirit as our Teacher and fall back into using our minds to figure it out, or our emotions to interpret.
- It's OK! We're not going to know everything and always get it right. We adjust, repent (if necessary), and get back on track.

Timothy was Paul's disciple and the pastor of the Ephesian Church. Paul gave him the following advice:

## **2 Timothy 2:14-19 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.

<sup>15</sup> **Do your best to present yourself [STUDY] to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling [DIVIDING] the word of truth.**

<sup>16</sup> But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness,

<sup>17</sup> and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,

<sup>18</sup> **who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.**

<sup>19</sup> But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

SPREADING FALSEHOOD. 2 members of Tim's congregation were spreading falsehoods that others were getting upset about—they thought they missed the resurrection! These 2 fellows were clearly misinterpreting the Scriptures and inserting their own beliefs, not to mention failing to receive proper instruction & correction. Being so, they were UNABLE to "rightly handle (divide) the word of truth" which is referring to the Bible.

HERMENEUTIC METHODS OF INTERPRETATION. Let me introduce you to some terms/concepts: Literal, Allegorical, Historical/Cultural, Moral, Contextual, Inspired/Biblical, & Heavenly. Don't worry, you don't need to memorize these! Let me explain them all.

LITERAL: take the words of the Bible literally unless the text specifically uses similes & metaphors. Attempting to apply symbols & allegories on our own leads to error, especially for the untrained reader.

## **Revelation 4:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> **After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven!** And the first voice, which I

had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

DOOR. John literally sees a door in the sky...was it a first century wooden door or a glowing portal? WDK...but it was a door and this isn't an allegory.

ALLEGORICAL: if you see a simile or metaphor in the Bible, then the interpretation is symbolic/allegorical.

- SIMILE: when reading Biblical text it says “like” or “as”.

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“LIKE” John says the voice he heard was “like” a trumpet, meaning it was the closest thing he could compare it too.

### **Revelation 4:2-3 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

<sup>3</sup> And he who sat there **had the appearance of** jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that **had the appearance of** an emerald.

“APPEARANCE” Another simile and, in this case, John uses word “appearance.”

- METAPHORS are a figure of speech given to an object, person, or action that doesn't directly apply.

### **Psalms 23:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

SHEPHERD. Jesus is called a Shepherd even though He wasn't one literally, in the sense that His livelihood was leading literal sheep around.

### **John 10:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

SHEEP. Another metaphor referring to you and I—those who believe in Jesus and are part of His flock! You and I aren't literally sheep, even though we called the same.

## **Don't try to apply an allegory or symbol unless the Scripture is indicating the same.**

**HISTORICAL/CULTURAL.** With a few rare exceptions, we cannot use modern times and culture to properly interpret the Bible. We must have some understanding of the time periods Scripture was written in, and what the culture was like.

**YANKEE STADIUM.** Suppose that 1000 years from now archeologists are digging through the ruins of NYC and discover what they refer to as “an ancient arena.” They describe a diamond shaped area with seating on all sides. They discover 4 points to the diamond, long wooden and metal sticks that look like clubs, several balls, and strange gloves...they're talking about Yankee Stadium, a baseball diamond.

**DIDN'T RESEARCH.** Suppose said archeologists didn't do any historical research to find out what it was, they would have nothing but uneducated speculation that wouldn't be accurate. All they need to do is dig into records to discover it's a baseball diamond and what purpose it served. Since you and I live in the age of baseball, we know what it is without having to be told. What's more if we were to write about it on SM or wherever, we would use the term and never explain it for the same reason. Again: someone discovering a text we sent 1000 years in the future would have to research the meaning.

**SAME APPLIES TO THE BIBLE.** There are events, objects, professions, traditions, laws, customs, etc. that were common at the time that you and I have no clue about and require a little digging.

### **Proverbs 31:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.

**What's a distaff?** When Proverbs was written, almost every woman in Jewish society carried one—it was used for spinning wool, flax, yarn, etc. The spindle was a device on the end of whatever she was spinning to add weight and help her to spin. The distaff served the purpose of the fiber to remain untangled. Thus when Solomon says “she puts her hand to the distaff” he's referring to a hard working woman who is also wise and pursues excellence!

### **Matthew 9:10-13 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.

<sup>11</sup> And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

<sup>12</sup> But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

<sup>13</sup> Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

**Why are tax collectors lumped in with sinners?** Elsewhere they're categorized with prostitutes too! Why does Jesus call them "sick"?

CHARGED ABOVE. A dig into history shows the Romans discovery that recruiting Jews to collect taxes from fellow Jews was far more effective than trying to get it themselves. Rome gave the TC's the names of everyone and how much they owed ROME...and the TC made their money by charging above and beyond that, and keeping the difference. If Johnny owed 100 denarius the TC could charge 125, keep the 25 for himself, give the 100 to Rome.

LOST EVERYTHING. Because of this practice, many Jews could not pay their taxes and lost their possessions, businesses, homes, and were sold into slavery.

TRAITORS/ZACH. As a result, TC's were considered traitors on the same level as Benedict Arnold and were therefore lumped in with the worst of society like thieves, prostitutes, sinners, etc. That's why Jesus recruiting Matthew as a disciple made the other disciples angry, because Matt was a tax collector. Zacchaeus was a TC who overcharged in a big way, yet Jesus goes to his house to eat. In the presence of the Lord, Zach repents and pays back the money to taxpayers.

MORAL INTERPRETATION. **When reading morality in the Bible, all of it is based on the moral aspects of God's Law as written in the first 5 books of the OT.** If we choose to read and apply modern day or personal morals into the Scripture, we'll fall into great error.

**Jesus fulfilled the OC rendering parts of it obsolete.**

- Because of His blood sacrifice on the Cross, we no longer need priests to kill animals to absolve our sins.
- Now that he's made us priests and filled us full of His Holy Spirit, we can "clean" (bless) our food supernaturally and no longer need to follow the dietary restrictions of the OC.
- As Jesus took God's wrath upon Himself, believers no longer need to carry out punishments for violation of God's Law such as stoning.

MORAL LAW. The part of the Law which remains intact are the moral aspect of the Law such as no stealing, lying, or committing adultery. ***Everything that God said was morally wrong during the Exodus is still wrong today...and that's the way we need to be reading the Bible.***

CONTEXTUAL. We can never take one verse of the Bible by itself and build a belief system from it, nor say “God means \_\_\_\_\_.” **WE MUST ALWAYS READ THE VERSES SURROUNDING THE ONE TO SEE WHAT THE AUTHOR IS TRULY SAYING.** The MSM does this all the time to people they don’t like: they’ll play a short soundbite out of context to make the person seem like a villain.

“LOVE COVERS....” Progressive Christians attempt to insert modern day morality into the Bible by quoting “love covers a multitude of sins.” They’re attempting to imply that God is OK with whatever lifestyle they’re arguing for, even if another part of the Bible calls it sin. I will often respond by asking them what the verses before the one they quoted say and they never know...because they’re merely regurgitating what they’ve heard from someone else. They’ve never studied to show themselves approved by God, able to correctly discern the word of truth.

CONTEXT. Scriptural context requires us to read the verses surrounding the one quoted to see what’s really going on...so let’s do that with “love covers a multitude of sins”:

FROM PETER. The quote appears in 1 Peter 4, verse 8...so reading the first 7 verses should reveal a fuller context to verse 8:

#### **1 Peter 4:1-7 (ESV)**

- <sup>1</sup> Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,
- <sup>2</sup> so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.
- <sup>3</sup> For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.
- <sup>4</sup> With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;
- <sup>5</sup> but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.
- <sup>6</sup> For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.
- <sup>7</sup> The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

CALL TO REPENTANCE. Peter is calling his congregation to repent of sin and stop following the passions of their flesh. To pursue the process of Sanctification and live a holy lifestyle. Ironically, the “Christians” who quote verse 8 have convinced themselves of the opposite—that what God calls sin is acceptable to Him just because He loves us. Ironically, they’re doing exactly what Peter warned against—following their passions and desires vs. following God.

## **Reading the first 7 verses of Peter's epistle clearly shows what God and Peter TRULY meant vs. people who take verse 8 out of context.**

*“Money is the root of all evil”* is another verse commonly taken out of context and therefore greatly misinterpreted. There's a common meme on SM that says “if money is the root of all evil, why do churches keep asking for it?”

- What does the actual verse say?
- What do the verses surrounding it say?

### **1 Timothy 6:5-10 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

<sup>6</sup> But godliness with contentment is great gain,

<sup>7</sup> for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.

<sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

<sup>9</sup> But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

<sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

PRETENDERS. Gleaning from what was happening historically in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Middle East, the Church was new and many false Apostles, Prophets, and Preachers were going around pretending to share the good news of Jesus and His NC. They were doing it for personal financial gain and people were willing to make offerings to hear about Christ. Paul was telling Timothy that these people were fakes.

“LOVE OF” LEFT OUT. Verse 10 is the oft quoted/misquoted verse: it's LOVE OF money that is the root of all kinds of evil. Money isn't evil and they needed it then just as we do now. The Apostle Paul took offerings and even asked for them from the churches he planted. Churches need money for the same reason homes, businesses, and charity orgs do: to pay the bills and keep running.

TRUE MEANING. Paul is clear: it's only when someone in ministry makes financial gain his goal that evil results. That means that said minister, church, charity, etc. loves money more than God or people.

## **Context is king!**

INSPIRED/BIBLICAL. Whenever possible, use the Bible to interpret the Bible.

**WHORE OF BABYLON.** In Revelation 17 an angel shows John a woman sitting on the back of a great Beast, drinking something from a cup. In verses 1-6 John describes what he's seeing in detail, but he doesn't know who she is or why the angel is showing him these things. And neither do we. Good news is that if we continue reading the Bible will tell us. The rest of the chapter has the angel interpreting everything John sees, who they are, what they mean, what they've done, and what they're going to do.

**DIG.** That's an easy example, but in the NT many references are made to the OT that require the reader to dig for, discern, and connect. For example, look what people asked at Jesus' Crucifixion:

**Matthew 27:45-49 (ESV)**

<sup>45</sup> Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

<sup>46</sup> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

<sup>47</sup> And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, **"This man is calling Elijah."**

<sup>48</sup> And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink.

<sup>49</sup> But the others said, **"Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."**

**MALACHI.** This wasn't just random speculation on their parts, but right from the final prophecy of the OT in Malachi:

**Malachi 4:5-6 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

<sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

**ELIJAH.** Remember that Elijah never died, but was caught up alive to Heaven where he remains to this day. Every Jew in the first century hung upon Malachi's final prophecy—that the Elijah would return and the fateful "Day of the Lord" would follow immediately. Thus when Jesus cried out some wondered if Elijah would appear, rescue Jesus, and then the day of God's wrath and vengeance upon the unbelieving world would begin.

**HEAVENLY PLAN.** We need to read the Bible in context to God's overall plan which will help explain why He does some of the things He does. Despite telling the disciples He would die on the Cross then rise from the dead 3 days later, the disciples didn't see God's bigger picture and therefore didn't believe. When Jesus was arrested they panicked, and when He died they cowered in the house waiting for their own end.



**BIGGER PICTURE.** The bigger picture was the He was the perfect sacrifice to cleanse all sin for all time!

- Then and only then could the Helper, the Holy Spirit, come to earth and dwell forever with us!
- Only then could the Gospel be spread to the Gentiles too so that everyone on the planet could receive Jesus and be in covenant with God!
- Once the Gospel spreads to every nation would the resurrection of the saints takes place and Messiah Jesus return as a conquering King and bring His Kingdom with Him!
- His Kingdom will spread and take over every nation and all people—everyone will bend the knee and call Him Lord!
- Only then can Satan and his angels be cast into the Lake of Fire and there will be eternal life, love, joy, and peace under Christ the King!

**We DO know the Plan** and let us read the Bible reminded everything God does and decides is toward the full manifestation of His Kingdom come, His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!