

HERMENEUTICS

Why Should We Consider the Original Languages?

God states many times over in the scriptures that His Word is pure and without fault; it is effective to accomplish what He intends; it is powerful; and it is both life-giving and life-transforming. He is referring to the actual inspired words. A grammatical interpretation of the scriptures has its basis in a confidence of and great appreciation for the inspiration, preservation, and reliability of the original texts. The power is not in the preacher's illustrations, the teacher's oratorical skills, or the translator's interpretation but in the actual inspired Word of God. Therefore, the student of the Bible ought to try to determine exactly what God inspired human authors to write. An accurate interpretation of God's Word requires an effort to understand the grammar used by the original authors.

All scripture is God-breathed - 2 Ti. 3:16

Every word of God is pure - Prov. 30:5

God's Word lives and abides forever - 1 Pe. 1:23

God's Word is life-giving and inherently powerful - Heb. 4:12

In light of these truths, believers ought to follow the instructions that Paul provided Timothy when he instructed him to make every effort to present himself approved as one who labors in the Word, dividing it up with great care (2 Ti. 2:15). Ever since the beginning of time there have been those that would twist and distort God's Word for personal advantage. Paul warned the Church about individuals that would "corrupt the Word of God" (2 Cor. 2:17). Paul uses a word that describes a shady salesman who "were in the habit of adulterating their commodities for the sake of gain". Believers should want to know what God is communicating in His Word rather than trying to make it say what they want it to say.

One caution must be noted before embarking on a grammatical interpretation of scripture, and that is grammar cannot provide an accurate interpretation apart from a contextual, historical, interpretation. An individual can spend all day talking about how Vine's defines such and such a word or what the future tense describes but it must not be considered in a vacuum. One must understand the grammar properly within the context of the passage.

According to Dr. Stephen R. Lewis, "The grammatical function of a word in a phrase or sentence often helps to determine its meaning." The remainder of the lesson will be focused on a handful of examples that demonstrate the importance of understanding the grammar of scripture for an accurate interpretation.

I. Verbs (action words) in the Greek and Hebrew Language

A. Tense

1. Aorist - We died to the power of the sin nature - Ro. 6:2
2. Present - Work out your own salvation - Phil. 2:12
3. Future - The Spirit was not present at that time - Jo. 15:26
4. Imperfect - Christ continually committed himself to the Father on the cross - 1 Pe. 2:23

B. Voice (who is doing the action)

1. Active Voice - subject is doing the action
 - a) Col. 3:16 - You have responsibility to let the Word dwell in you
2. Middle Voice - the subject is doing the action to himself or for himself (personal benefit)
 - a) Eph. 5:22 - wives submit for yourself (own benefit)

- b) Col. 3:18 - submit for your own self (willing, not grudgingly or by coercion)
- 3. Passive Voice - someone is doing the action to the subject
 - a) Eph. 6:10 - be made strong in the Lord
 - b) 2 Ti. 2:1 - be made strong in (by) grace
 - c) Ro. 6:18 - having been made free from sin (recognize its been done)

II. The Article - "The"

A. Clarification

- 1. Eph. 2:20 - "The" only used once I "the apostles and prophets" (only one foundation, not two)
- 2. Jesus' play on words - Jo. 3:2-10

B. Doctrines

- 1. "The truth" is emphasized by the article - Jo. 8:32; 2 Tim. 3:7; 4:4
- 2. The rapture is emphasized by the article - 2 Thess. 2:3
- 3. The deity of Christ - John 1:1

C. Absence of the article

- 1. A way of salvation (one of many?) - Acts 16:17
- 2. A sampling of God's wrath vs. the full dose - Ro. 1:18

III. Prepositions

A. The Greek word *en* is used to denote location - Eph. 1:6

B. The Greek word *sun* denotes intimacy - Ro. 6:6; Eph. 2:5-6

C. The Greek word *ek* means "out from" not "out through" - Rev. 3:10

IV. Conjunctions

A. The use of the word *de* instead of *kai* points to pastor-teachers - Eph. 4:11

B. Paul building a case for preaching the Gospel using the word *gar* - Ro. 1:15-18