



The Bible, Interpretation

What you believe the Bible teaches in prophecy depends upon how you approach interpretation of the Bible. The main premises of the pre-Tribulational Rapture position are the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, the dispensational interpretation of the Word of God.

Literal interpretation

To interpret literally is nothing more or less than interpreting words and sentences in their normal, usual, customary, and proper designation. Land of Canaan means real land, dirt, earth. Forever used of the land of Canaan means “forever” not just a long time. The basic issue is whether the biblical documents are to be approached in the normal, customary, usual way in which men talk, write, and think; or whether that level is only preliminary to second deeper levels.

The allegorist says that the “land of Canaan” has to become heaven, to believe any other thing is to be woodenheaded. If this was carried forth in our own history, the famous ride of Paul Revere would be as conscience riding to the rescue of virtue at the approach of temptation. Adam and Eve lose their historical significance and only exist to illustrate a point.

Literal interpretation does not rule out the use of figurative speech, parables, types and so on. The principle is that behind the figurative use of a word, there is always a literal meaning that God intended. In Genesis 15:1, “I am a shield to you” means God is Abram’s protector. “Your reward shall be very great” means that God will bless him greatly. In John 10:9, “I am the door” does not mean that Christ is a literal door, but that He is the only opening or means to reaching heaven.

"After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."" (Genesis 15:1, NASB)

""I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." (John 10:9, NASB)

Cultural Interpretation

A most important principle is that the Bible must be interpreted in accordance with the time in which it was written. The interpreter must study Bible history and history of nations surrounding the Bible. The interpreter must study Bible geography. The interpreter must study Bible culture.

For example, Grecian lamps in use in Palestine were very small and for the foolish virgins to expect them to burn for the three-hour vigil (or longer) was very foolish. The interpreter should study the political structure of Bible times, the philosophy of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, etc.

The interpreter should study the legal system and its systems of penalty. For example, the aspects of the trials of Christ including illegal movements in them by the Sanhedrin. The interpreter should understand the religious practices of Judaism. For example, if a girl fell and got mud on her skirt on the Sabbath, she would not be allowed to change the dress or wash it off.

The interpreter should understand the economic structure of Bible times. The interpreter should understand the Roman Empire had a tremendous economy and why. They should understand Julius Caesar and the use of slavery in Roman times. Cultural interpretation is very important, but should not become a fetish. It is not the dominating factor in interpretation!



Critical Interpretation

Critical interpretation does not mean skepticism. Critical interpretation means that any interpretation of Scripture must have adequate justification. The interpreter must understand clearly why such interpretation was made and it must make sense according to the existing facts!

Interpretation must not conflict with the facts of history. Interpretation must not conflict with the four-fold navigational fix of the original languages. Interpretation must not conflict with the cultural use of a word. Interpretation must not conflict with the facts of geography at the time of writing. The truest interpretations are those with the best justification.

Use of Greek Text in Interpretation

The Greek language is so explicit that it can be subject to only one interpretation. Syntax deals with the grammatical relationships between words. Every Greek verb has a four-fold navigational fix.

Tense (kind of action):

Tense is an expression of the action or time of the verb. The *present tense* is habitual action in present time - "our lamps are going out" in Matthew 25:8. The *imperfect tense* is continuous action in past time - "And the crowds were questioning him" in Luke 3:10. The *perfect tense* is the completed tense as in Ephesians 2:8-9. The *aorist tense* is the occurring tense - "forty-six years to build this temple" in John 2:20.

"The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'" (Matthew 25:8, NASB)

"And the crowds were questioning him, saying, 'Then what shall we do?'" (Luke 3:10, NASB)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9, NASB)

"The Jews then said, 'It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?'" (John 2:20, NASB)

Voice:

The voice is the relationship of the subject to the main verb. In the *active voice*, the subject produces the action of the verb. In Acts 16:31, "Believe" is active, you must believe, you must initiate the action of believing.

"They said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.'" (Acts 16:31, NASB)

In the *passive voice*, the subject receives the action of the main verb. The voice of grace in "by grace you have been saved" in Ephesians 2:8. In the *middle voice*, the subject is benefitted by the action of the verb. In John 15:16, "You did not choose Me but I chose you" means "I have chosen you for my benefit."

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;" (Ephesians 2:8, NASB)

"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you." (John 15:16, NASB)



Mood:

Mood is the speaker's or writer's attitude toward reality. The *imperative mood* is the mood of command. In 1 Corinthians 11:24, "do this in remembrance of Me" means "keep on doing this in remembrance of Me." In Matthew 5:44 "love your enemies" means "keep on loving your enemies."

"and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" (1 Corinthians 11:24, NASB)

"'But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,' (Matthew 5:44, NASB)

The *indicative mood* is the mood of reality and means the event actually occurred as indicated. For example, in John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word." The *subjunctive mood* is the potential mood, it could happen potentially. In John 14:31, "let us go from here" is an example. The *optative mood* expresses a wish. In 2 Thessalonians 3:5 "May the Lord direct your hearts" is an example.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1, NASB)

"but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here." (John 14:31, NASB)

"May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ." (2 Thessalonians 3:5, NASB)

Etymology:

Etymology is how a word was used at the time in which it was written. It is used to bring out the true meaning of a word. What Ephesians 4:14 is really saying is; "If you don't know Bible doctrine as a Christian, it's like shooting craps with the devil, and the devil has loaded the dice so the odds are against you."

"As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;" (Ephesians 4:14, NASB)

Vocabulary in Interpretation

In Genesis 2:19, Adam needed vocabulary to accomplish a task, i.e. name the animals.

"Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name." (Genesis 2:19, NASB)

In Genesis 2:23, Adam named his wife "Woman."

"The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.'" (Genesis 2:23, NASB)

In Genesis 3:20, Adam renamed his wife "Eve." To teach, one needs vocabulary, a factual vocabulary which is based upon categories.

"Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living." (Genesis 3:20, NASB)

God's essence has ten main characteristics. God is light. The barrier between Man and God has six problems to be solved: sin, penalty of sin, physical birth, the character of God, human good of man, and



life.

Man is immoral, self-righteous, religious or a combination of all three. The Cross is the meeting place of God and man. Grace is what God does for man, man receives it, God is glorified.

Salvation is obtained only by believing in Christ. Faith-believe is a transitive verb where the object of merit is Jesus Christ. To be justified means to be made righteous.

Use of Techniques in Interpretation

Techniques are used in interpretation. The technique of confession of sin using 1 John 1:9. Claiming God's promises, faith-rest. Living in the Word by studying it, surveying it, categorizing it, and meditating on it. The Holy Spirit controlling the believer's soul through the filling of the Holy Spirit. Thinking divine viewpoint versus human viewpoint.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, NASB)

The compartments of the soul: self-consciousness, mentality, volition, emotion, conscience. You are either positive to Bible doctrine and applying the *epignosis* Bible doctrine in your soul to life's situations while being in fellowship with the Lord or you are negative to Bible doctrine and in a state of carnality with the old sin nature controlling your soul and building scar tissue.

A believer is either 100% in fellowship with the Holy Spirit controlling the soul or 100% out of fellowship in a state of sin with the old sin nature controlling the soul.

Positional Truth and our relationship with Jesus Christ. Eternal life, absolute righteousness, predestination, election, priesthood, kingship, sanctification, accepted in the beloved, heirship, sonship, etc.

Why so Many Scriptural Interpretations?

Why are there so many different Scriptural interpretations? Some teachers of the Word of God are born-again, some are not! Some teachers of the Word of God believe in verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, some do not. Some teachers of the Word of God do not have access to the original language, some do. This affects interpretation.

Some teachers of the Word of God consistently prepare (study), some do not. Some teachers of the Word of God function according to isagogics, categories, exegesis and the Greek's four-fold grammatical navigational fix. Some teachers of the Word of God are men pleasers and some are God pleasers. This affects interpretation.

The principle here is the interpreter of Scripture must be consistently accurate, a pastor-teacher must be saved and operate constantly on positive volition, according to the Bible.

Positive Volition is Vital for Proper Bible interpretation.

The application of 1 John 1:9 puts the carnal believer back in fellowship with God. You must be in fellowship to understand the stages of spiritual growth and the occupational hazards of each. 1 John 1:1-10; 1 John 2:12-14.

"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was



manifested to us— what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.” (1 John 1:1-10, NASB)

“I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.” (1 John 2:12-14, NASB)

You must develop spiritual discernment. You must learn the Word of God when it is available. Life is too short to waste it. Find your priorities and stick with them. 1 Cor. 2:16.

“For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16, NASB)

Until you have found a good local church that teaches Bible doctrine, get recorded Bible doctrine lessons from reputable pastor-teachers who teach Bible doctrine from the original languages and begin learning the Word of God. Listen to these recorded lessons when you are traveling or have time during the day. But the most effective way is to get face-to-face categorical teaching with an open Bible before you, you can study as the Word is taught.