

Just Your Interpretation?

Joe Slater

I always smile (at least on the inside) when someone asks me, “What does the church of Christ believe about such-and-such?” Usually my reply is something like this: “I don’t know what the church believes about it, but let’s see what the Bible says.”

I understand what folks are asking – they’re used to the idea of a church having a creed or confession of faith that spells out its “official position” on various issues. But the question arises: If you need a creed to “interpret” the Bible, what makes you think you can understand the creed? Will you need another document to “interpret” the creed? And another to interpret the interpretation of the creed? Where does this end?

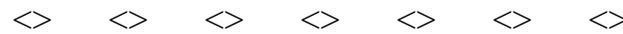
The whole idea of “interpreting” the Bible is troublesome. If, by “interpret,” we mean to determine the teaching of a passage, then of course we must do so. Jesus severely criticized those who failed to use Scripture and sound reasoning to arrive at truthful conclusions (see Matthew 22:29-32).

But many understand “interpret” to mean putting your own slant on a text to suit your personal agenda. A common assertion, “That’s just your interpretation,” betrays such thinking. It assumes that there are as many interpretations as there are people, and that any particular interpretation is as valid as any other. Therefore, we cannot know for certain what the truth is, nor can we say that any particular interpretation is right or wrong.

Is there such a thing as the “right” interpretation? Paul affirmed that people who read what he wrote can understand (Ephesians 3:4). That isn’t to say there aren’t “*some things hard to understand*” (2 Peter 3:16). However, by using the Scriptures with sound reasoning, we can reach reliable conclusions. Peter did not say that

those difficult things admit of a dozen interpretations; in fact, he warned that “*those who are untaught and unstable twist* (those hard passages) *to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures*” (2 Peter 3:16).

Indeed, wrong interpretations are destructive to our spiritual wellbeing! Let us stand boldly with the word of God, “*handling aright the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15).



An Ode to the Dislocated

I looked around our Bible class
Last Sunday, and ‘tis true;
Familiar faces greeted me,
But I couldn’t locate you.
And Sunday night – it was the same –
It made me feel so blue
Though heartened by the ones who came,
I couldn’t locate you.
Then Wednesday evening brought us back,
The usual mid-week crew;
I searched and hoped and searched some more,
But I couldn’t locate you.
It seems so often when we meet
And find our favorite pew,
That something’s missing; something’s wrong –
We just can’t locate you.
You’re missed, you know! We want you back!
You need to be here, too.
We’d hate to search through heaven,
Unable to locate you.

Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK) via Old Paths

ALL THESE THINGS

”But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”
(Matthew 6:33).

Winters can be harsh in Colorado. Snow comes in abundance, temperatures fall far below zero, and the cold arctic winds bring the temperatures even lower. We had such a day last week. The snow sparkled in the sun, but the scene was deceiving. The thermometer read ten below zero. Not a bird nor a squirrel stirred in the trees, and no geese were on the frozen lake or eating grass in the park.

Today the temperature was already in the 30's when we rose. Birds sang from tree branches and power lines, and squirrels chased each other up and down tree trunks and along wooden fences. Where do they go during the days of bitter cold? What do they eat? How do they keep from freezing to death? The only answer I have is what Jesus said, “*Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feeds them*” (Matt. 6:26). God takes care of them.

We see God's love and care in action when we look at the animals, and we believe. God has given us, His children, the same promise. “*Are not you of much more value than they? Why be anxious?*” Jesus asks. The simple answer is that we should not be anxious. We should not worry, but instead, spend our energies on seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness. Leave the rest to God, for He has promised that “*all these things*” will be given us.

“All these things”--food, clothes, housing, salvation, spiritual guidance, comfort, a place in His kingdom, eternal life, and many more. Just like God cares for the animals, so He cares for us.

Donna Richmond Wittlif (Denver, CO, 1/13/14)