



Check the Map & Adjust the Heading

Misdirections and Errors in Interpretation

Herb Paynter

Incorrect assumptions and misinterpretations cause spiritual shipwrecks

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The Purpose of This Study.

This study has a single goal; to examine the meanings of a handful of terms and phrases generally used by today's Christian community in the light of Scriptural context. This study is presented without reference to popular commentaries and other reference materials presenting various denominational positions. However, the interpretations are largely my own.

There will be some direct quotations from other texts for the purpose of accurately stating the current teaching and interpretations, but there will be few occasions when references are made to the positions of other Bible teachers.

Word Definitions and Distortions

I certainly feel no special anointing or ability that elevates my interpretation of these words above the multitudes of great Bible teachers and theologians. I simply choose to parse Greek and Hebrew words based on careful study of passage context rather than on much safer interpretations. I chose to rely on what the Holy Spirit reveals to me from the Word of God. What you will see is a fresh look at some traditional terms.

I will exegete passages on the weight of Bible passages *alone*. Since many terms are used in different ways in different passages, context alone must determine the meanings of those terms with strict adherence to biblical hermeneutics and original language definitions.

Contextual accuracy will be relied on rather than adherence to traditional positions. Perhaps some of the doctrinal and practical conflicts that exist between numerous denominations could be clarified by a clear, direct and unobstructed examination of Scripture alone.

Although the previous paragraphs sound quite presumptuous, if not downright arrogant, my intent is not to

“straighten out the theology of the ignorant Christian masses.” I have neither the ability, the calling, nor the audacity to present any such document. My intent is very personal. I want to find the truth that lurks beneath many of the *seeming* incongruities that I have found in my own personal study of the Scriptures.

This study is a somewhat exhaustive research of several “assumed and commonly accepted” words and terms used in today’s churches as they individually apply to each of the three parts of the believer; the body, the soul, and the spirit. It is my personal and deep conviction that when Scripture passages are parsed with relevance to man’s triune parts, tremendous clarity of God’s Word becomes evident.

As I look at the present-day church as the ship taking all believers to the heart of God, it would appear that our ship has made small, but marked, navigational errors over the course of the last century, largely due to careless term assumptions and, as a result finds itself now veering off course.

Even more alarming is that while our *vessel* has veered off its intended course, very few of the officers on deck seem to have noticed the deviation. It would seem that the navigators are too busy with other activities to notice.

For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe, the horse was lost; for want of a horse, the rider was lost; for want of a rider the battle was lost; for want of the battle, the kingdom was lost

...all for the want of a nail.

Introduction

It's the little things in life that matter. They matter a lot. It's the small, seemingly insignificant things that usually add up and result in the most catastrophic losses. Things like 49¢ o-rings on a huge space shuttle.

We've seen this phenomenon at work in every part of our lives; from our health, to our relationships, right down to our own walk with the Lord. It's the cumulative effect of nearly indistinguishable errors that result in lives heading *significantly* off course. Nobody knowingly, or intentionally misses a target. Getting lost is what happens to us when we're in unknown territory and we are not closely following the map.

What typically happens in life is that while we're monitoring the really big stuff, we lose track of the really little stuff. And then one day we discover that a small miscalculation in navigation years ago has now resulted in a voyage lost at sea. While we would prefer to not label it so, God calls this *aimless*.

This happens to all believers, and it happens way too often. While this is a discouraging trend, it shouldn't surprise us, it certainly doesn't surprise God. He's known of this pattern all along, and equipped us with a *personal calibration system* two thousand years ago in the writings by the Apostles Paul and John. First, Paul taught us the price of course miscalculation (*sin*-Romans 3:23), and then the Apostle John taught us how to use God's re-calibration process to get us back on course (*confession*-1 John 1:9). Knowing that occasionally man would find themselves "out of kilter," God provided us with this system to enable us wanderers to return to our assigned courses and continue on our appointed journeys.

When we consider the fact that this lifetime is the only opportunity given to us earthlings to discover and cultivate

our relationship with our God, we should pay a little more attention to the detailed map He has provided and stop making so many “scenic route” excursions along the journey. If we are not careful, our meandering can leave us far from our desired destination with little or no time for course correction.

Overlooking the Un-obvious

Until well into the 19th century, the medical community didn't realize that near-invisible things called germs were the cause major illnesses. Doctors were focused on “bad” blood as the problem while the real cause was the germs *inside* the blood. To rid the body of illness, measured amounts of blood were drawn out of the ill person's body. Many patients died because of a blood shortage as a result of this well-intended, but misguided treatment. While the problem was *in* the blood, the problem was not the blood itself.

The practice of bloodletting seemed logical when the foundation of all medical treatment was based on the four body fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. Health was thought to be restored by purging, starving, vomiting or bloodletting.

The art of bloodletting was flourishing well before Hippocrates in the fifth century B.C. By the middle ages, both surgeons and barbers were specializing in this bloody practice. Barbers advertised with a red (for blood) and white (for tourniquet) striped pole. The pole itself represented the stick squeezed by the patient to dilate the veins.

Bloodletting came to the U. S. on the Mayflower. The practice reached unbelievable heights in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Bloodletting was a common treatment for diseases. When the body was ill, infected blood was literally drained from the body. The first U.S. president, George Washington,

died from a throat infection in 1799 after being drained of nine pints of blood within 24 hours. The draining of 16-30 ounces (one to four pints) of blood was typical. Great care was taken to remove the same amount of blood from either side of the body to retain balance.

Those nasty little germs went unnoticed for millennia until they were finally discovered to be the cause of infection and disease. Yes, the blood was bad, but nobody questioned *why* it was bad. *Nobody purposely ignored the truth*, they simply didn't *know* the truth. They couldn't comprehend that something so small as a germ could have such a huge effect on human health.

Most of those in the medical community at that time scoffed at the “crazy idea” that something invisible to the naked eye could prove be the cause of so much disease. Louis Pasteur's discovery of these microscopic attackers changed medical practice forever. He finally “saw” the small stuff. And, more important, he (and others) took the bold step to do something about it. They developed ways to deal with germs before the germs were able to do their dirty work.

Little things count!

Accepting any new concept, even with solid evidence to back up that concept, is always a difficult process. To accept any new truth one has to admit to being mistaken or misled. This is a most uncomfortable state to be in. It can make any person (or a system) feel educationally shallow, incompetent or deceived.

Besides all that, it is *very* embarrassing to admit. Unfortunately, facing up to a new discovery becomes a personal pride issue that is very difficult to own up to and deal with. We'll visit the pride issue later.