

(Guidelines) Interpretation I

by J. Vernon McGee

J. Vernon McGee emphasizes the importance of proper interpretation of Scripture and the reliability of the Bible amidst contemporary challenges.

Duration: 13:26

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Psalm 119:105, Matthew 4:4, John 14:6, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21, Revelation 22:18-19

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Divine Inspiration"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance and significance of the Bible. He describes it as containing the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, and the doom of sinners. The preacher highlights that the Bible is holy in its doctrines, binding in its precepts, true in its histories, and immutable in its decisions. He encourages believers to read the Bible to gain wisdom, believe in its teachings for safety, and practice its principles for holiness. The preacher also addresses the attacks and criticisms against the Bible, highlighting the claims of its plenary verbal inspiration and the guarantee of its revelation through divine inspiration.

Transcript

Now, interpretation has to do with the interpretation that you and I make. That's the human side, and that's the reason there are Methodists and Baptists and Presbyterians and Vernon McGees, because we all have our interpretations. And may I say to you, some of us are evidently wrong.

The Bible doesn't teach everything, or doesn't teach two things. It teaches just one thing, and that has to do with interpretation. There are certain rules that we'll follow, and we'll call attention to them as we go along.

No scripture should be interpreted by itself. I think that is a very important thing. I do not think any of us have any right just to lift out one verse and build a doctrine on that verse.

And no doctrine should ever be built on an uncertain text of scripture, or a group of them. Any solid teaching. And it was Dr. Westcott and Hoyt who said that actually in our translation, only one word in ninety was ever involved in any question at all, and none regarded doctrine, none regarding that which is vital.

You and I can be sure today that the text we have is a reliable text. But there are many versions, and that's confusing today. And may I say this to you.

I have all the versions. Every time a new one comes out, I put it in my library. I'd look at them generally, but I still stick with the authorized version.

I personally have before me right now the Old Schofield Reference Bible. I find it very helpful. I have the New Schofield, but I have difficulty finding my way around in it, it's so new.

But may I say to you that the authorized version is still a good version. And many of these others are helpful to turn to. Someone asked me if I thought even Living Letters was a good translation.

I think it's a marvelous interpretation, but not a translation. And there are some very fine versions today, but most of them are clouded with the personal viewpoint of the One who gave them to us. Now, this gives us something of the background of the book that we are going to look at.

And I think that probably we ought to look at the definition of the Bible in closing. This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.

Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It's a traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, the Christian's charter.

Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object. Our good is its design and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory, rule the heart, guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It's a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure.

It's given you in life. It'll be opened in the judgment, will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

Very candidly, we are dealing with a book today that's under attack, as no book has ever been under attack. Dr. McGiffert years ago made this statement. He was a great professor, by the way, of history, but he took this viewpoint.

And I'm quoting him now. And there are probably few Protestant theologians today who treat the early chapters of Genesis as sober history. And may I say to you, these statements like that could be multiplied ad infinitum.

For instance, Dr. C. H. Dodd, he said long ago it became clear that in claiming for the Bible accuracy and matters of science and history, its apologists had chosen a hopeless position to defend. The harm has been done to the general conscience by allowing the outworn morality of parts of the Old Testament to stand as authoritative declarations. Now may I say to you, these are very serious attacks and they can be multiplied today.

And even in some of our so-called conservative seminaries today, some very strange things are being said. In Vassar College, for instance, and I was interested in noting this, that Mary McCarthy, writing on the Vassar Girl, back some time ago in Holiday Magazine, she said that the curriculum of the college was

as it had always been, with just one exception, and the curriculum went something like this. The English language, its literature, other modern languages, the ancient classics, and so on and so on.

And then finally it says, and I'm reading now, "...last and most important of all, the daily systematic reading and study of the Holy Scriptures as the only and all-sufficient rule of Christian faith and practice." And Mary McCarthy said, "...the curriculum, except for the last proviso, remains the basis of the Vassar education." In other words, the Bible has been kicked out lock, stock, and barrel. Now, let me put over against this some very interesting statements because of the fact that we are living right now in a day when the divisions among so-called Christians just doesn't happen to be according to denominational lines. And it was as far back as 1902 that a cabinet minister in Great Britain made this statement, and I'm quoting him, "...the old denominational barriers are growing shadowy and unreal.

The real division that is coming is between those who believe that the Bible is the word of God and those who do not." And that's where we are today, by the way. And I personally resent the statement that some of these men make that no intelligent person today believes the Bible and that no intelligent person could believe the Bible. Let me quote from Gladstone, probably one of the greatest legal minds Great Britain ever produced.

And they've had some giants, by the way. Here is what he says, and I'm quoting him now, "...talk about the questions of the day. There is but one question, and that's the gospel, that can and will correct everything.

I'm glad to say that about all the men at the top in Great Britain are Christians." Now, that was back in 1902. And may I inject something else? "...that may be back of Great Britain's present problems." Now, I'm reading again from Gladstone. "...I have been in public position 58 years, all but 11 of them in the cabinet of the British government.

And during those 47 years, I have been associated with 60 of the masterminds of the century, and all but 5 of the 60 were Christians." May I say to you that's a tremendous statement. I personally think that part of the problem we're having in the world today is that we have too few Christians at the top, and therefore we have too few who know the most important book in the world, which happens to be still the Word of God itself. Now, not only is that true of this man Gladstone, but may I say that other great men down through the history of the world have taken that position? Michael Faraday.

And I suppose that he was the greatest scientific experimenter the world has ever seen. And there's a very few men that enter a laboratory today and pour acid in a test tube or look through a microscope that don't have to pay tribute to this man here. He was a genius.

And this is what he said, "...but why will people go astray when they have this blessed book of God to guide them?" And then Sir Isaac Newton, he was born way back yonder and he was a scientist, and he made this statement. He says, "...if the Bible is true, the time will come when men shall travel 50 miles an hour." And Voltaire, the skeptic in that day, answered like this, Poor Isaac. He was in his dotage when he made that prophecy.

It only shows what Bible study will do to an otherwise scientific mind. May I say, we can see today what it did do. It proved that Voltaire was very much mistaken and proved to be very much a fool in many respects in his attack upon the Bible, and that Sir Isaac Newton probably knew something that he did not know.

May I say to you, these are remarkable statements that we have given to you here, and I could multiply these and bring in today many that believe the Bible. Now, that leads me to say a word concerning the first of these four very important subjects that relate to the Bible. Revelation means God hath spoken, and thus saith the Lord occurs over 2,500 times in the Scripture.

And the Scripture does claim that it is plenary, verbally inspired of God. Now, that brings me to the second great subject, which is inspiration. And inspiration guarantees the revelation that we have from God.

It was not too many years ago that Great Britain bought Codex Sinaiticus from the Russian government for the British Museum. And that was back, by the way, in 1933. And they paid at that time 100,000 pounds, that's half a million dollars, to get that document.

And it's interesting, the Communists have said that religion is the opiate of the people. And they were pretty good at peddling dope themselves, weren't they? They got quite a price for that which they considered nothing in the world but dope and worthless. Well, anyway, this is what Sir George Kenyon, who was the late director and principal librarian of the British Museum, and here was the statement he made, and I'm quoting, "...thanks to these manuscripts, the ordinary reader of the Bible may feel comfortable about the soundness of the text, apart from a few unimportant verbal alterations natural in books transcribed by hand, the New Testament, we now feel assured, has come down intact." May I say to you, that was one of the most important discoveries that was ever made.

You can be sure today that we have that which is as close to the autographs as anything possibly can be. And not only that, inspiration still guarantees the revelation that we have.

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