

(Guidelines) Interpretation li

by J. Vernon McGee

J. Vernon McGee discusses the challenges and guidelines of interpreting the Bible, emphasizing the importance of original texts and context in understanding Scripture.

Duration: 13:47

Scripture: Joshua 1:2, Psalm 19:4, Psalm 119:89, Psalm 119:160, Isaiah 40:8, Isaiah 55:11, Matthew 24:35

Topics: "Bible Interpretation", "Scripture Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the topic of interpretation of the Bible. He begins by addressing the question of whether modern translations of the Bible can be trusted. He expresses his hesitation in recommending modern translations, emphasizing the importance of considering the overall purpose of the Bible and the intended audience of specific scriptures. The speaker concludes by highlighting the power and significance of the word of God, describing it as a source of peace, comfort, and guidance for all people.

Transcript

Now, let's come to this fourth subject, Interpretation. I've already spoken of the versions, and I'd like to just add this to that also. I've had to move so speedily the other day, and I forgot that we're going to be together here five years, so we have a little time to talk about these things.

The question often arises, what about the versions that we have today? The translations, are they dependable? And what about the modern translations? Can we depend upon them? Now, I want to make this statement recognizing that it is a blanket statement, and it's a generalization. And as the French proverb has it, all generalizations are untrue, including this one. And therefore, the fact of the matter is, I cannot recommend the modern translations.

Now, I recognize that there are some good things in them. In fact, in most of them there is. Even one or two put out by the liberals today.

It's excellent Greek in places. But I found out that today we are so divided doctrinally that every group that attempts to translate the Bible just naturally injects into his translation his particular viewpoint. Therefore, if the liberal is going to do the translating, you may get just a little taste of liberalism.

And if the fundamentalist is going to do the translating, you'll get his bias in certain places. I feel that the man who did the original translation, a man who believed that it was the Word of God and that they handled it like that. And actually, certain words they wouldn't translate.

They just transliterated them. Abba, for instance, Abba, Father. They didn't dare translate that word Abba.

And the same is true of baptizo, baptized. They just transliterated it. And yet we have so many today that want to be dogmatic about things.

And you see, that's the danger today in these modern translations. And then actually some of them are not too good in their translating. I would like to take this position, which I do, that they are interpretations.

Now I have my bookshelf right where I prepare my messages. I have that bookshelf filled with all the translations, good, bad, and indifferent. And I refer, sometimes I'll refer to 15 different translations.

Why? Just see what these men have to say. And me, I look at them as a form not of translation but interpretation. And I would like to call them that.

I said concerning one the other day, which I'll not specify right now, somebody said, is this a good translation? And I said, well, it's owing to how you look at it. I said it's a marvelous interpretation but a lousy translation. Now when you translate, you have to take something out of one language and put it into another language in comparable terms, identical terms if possible.

And the thing that most of these modern translations are trying to do is to get it into modern speech. And to get it into modern speech, many times they really miss what the original is saying. And I personally, as I've said before, I stick by the authorized version.

I don't find it too difficult. The haths and thous and the these don't seem to bother me. In fact, I guess through the habit of the years that they add a note of reverence.

And I personally would recommend the American standard version of 19.1 of being more accurate than any other. I feel like the new Scofield reference Bible has made a tremendous step forward in this connection in making certain distinctions and corrections that needed to be made. I personally still use the old Scofield reference Bible.

I know my way around through the book. And after all, the old scout will follow the old trail because he knows that. And that's the reason that I use it.

I'd recommend it also, of course. I'd like to give you here something that's quite interesting in this connection of translation. And it comes from a man who actually was a rank unbeliever, George Bernard Shaw.

And he had some harsh things to say about religion, that is, about present-day churches and present-day Christianity. But notice what he says concerning the translation that we have in the Scripture. He says the translation was extraordinarily well done because to the translators, what they were translating was not merely a curious collection of ancient books written by different authors in different stages of culture, but the Word of God divinely revealed through His chosen and expressly inscribed scribes.

In this conviction, they carried out their work with boundless reverence and care and achieved a beautiful artistic result. He's talking about the authorized version. That's George Bernard Shaw.

Now, actually, there are, frankly, in interpretation, certain, I think, rules that should be followed. And today, the great difference among some of us conservatives is the fact that we differ on interpretation. We believe the Bible is the Word of God.

We believe it's plenary, verbally inspired. Now, this may surprise some of you, but one of the leading Pentecostal leaders of this country today, he and I have had lunch together, and he wants us to resume this. And we sit down and talk about our mutual differences and also about where we are in agreement.

And you know we agree more than we disagree. Fact of the matter is, I think I'm about to convert him, friends. And I say that facetiously because he's a wonderful man of God, and I love him in the Lord, and I respect him.

And you know why? Because he believes this book is the Word of God, just like I do. And he loves the Lord Jesus maybe more than I do. And he trusts him as his Savior, just as I do.

And so he and I can sit down together, and we can disagree, and I can just tell him that one of these days, he's going to see it as I see it. And he said, yes. And that day I see it as you see it, you're going to change also, and we both will see it eye to eye.

Well, that day's coming. Now there are certain rules that we need to keep in mind. One is the overall purpose of the Bible, and that's the reason I'm teaching all of it, is because I believe you need to have it all before you can come to any dogmatic statement concerning any particular verse of Scripture.

And that is something that's important, to take all verses that are related to that subject in consideration. That's important. And then also, we ought to always consider the Scripture to whom it's addressed.

Now way back yonder, God says to Joshua, arise, go over this Jordan. Now you know, when I was over in that land, I crossed the Jordan River. That's when you could cross it then without being shot at, and I crossed over.

But I didn't cross it to fulfill that Scripture, and I didn't say to somebody, well, now I've obeyed the Lord, I've crossed over Jordan. No, when I read that back in Joshua, I have a feeling that the Lord is talking to Joshua. But I believe there's a tremendous lesson there for me.

All Scripture is not to me, but all Scripture is for me, and that's a very good rule to keep in mind. And then we ought to always consider the immediate context, either before and after Scripture. And then, as we've indicated, there should be a consideration of all Scripture relative to a certain passage of Scripture.

And then there should be an attempt made to discover what the original says. Now you recognize in our versions we have certain translations, and they're good. They give to us meaning.

I think that when you're reading that American Standard Version of 19.1, you're right close to what the Lord said. But the important thing is determine what the exact text, and that's the reason in several of our study books I attempted to give a translation. And as I've said a thousand times, I wouldn't recommend that to anybody.

But we did attempt to go back to the original, and I think that's imperative. Let me give you a rule that years ago I heard Dr. David Cooper, the late Dr. David Cooper of Southern California, give. He said this, and this is a good one.

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. Therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise. Now, that may be a little complicated, but I want to tell you that's just about as fine as you could possibly have.

And remember, he said, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. And he said, Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in the heavens. The psalmist said that.

The Bible was born in the East and clothed in Oriental form and imagery. The Bible walks the ways of all the world with familiar feet and enters land after land to find its own everywhere. It's learned to speak in hundreds of languages to the heart of man.

It comes into the palace to tell the monarch that he's a servant of the Most High, and into the cottage to assure the peasant that he's a son of God. Children listen to its stories with wonder and delight, and wise men ponder them as parables of life. It has a word of peace for the time of peril, a word of comfort for the time of calamity, a word of light for the hour of darkness.

Its oracles are repeated in the assembly of the people, its counsels whispered in the ear of the lonely, the wicked and the proud tremble at its warnings, but to the wounded and the penitent it has a mother's voice. The wilderness and the solitary place have been made glad by it, and the fire on the earth has lit the reading of its well-worn pages. It has woven itself into our dearest dreams so that love, friendship, sympathy and devotion, memory and hope put on the beautiful garments of its treasured speech, breathing of frankincense and myrrh.

The Bible, the Word of God. Now we come, actually, today to our last study in the Bible itself, and next time we'll begin to talk about the guidelines that we suggest to you for studying the Bible in light of all that we've already said. It was Dryden, by the way, who wrote, Quince, but from heaven could man unskilled in arts in several ages born in several parts weave such agreeing truths or how or why should all conspire to cheat us with a lie, unasked their pains, ungrateful their advice, starving their gain and martyrdom their price.

This is a tremendous statement that is made here concerning the Word of God.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/8/SID8462.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-vernon-mcgee/guidelines-interpretation-ii/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net