

WHY IS INTERPRETATION NEEDED?



Lesson 6 for May 9, 2020

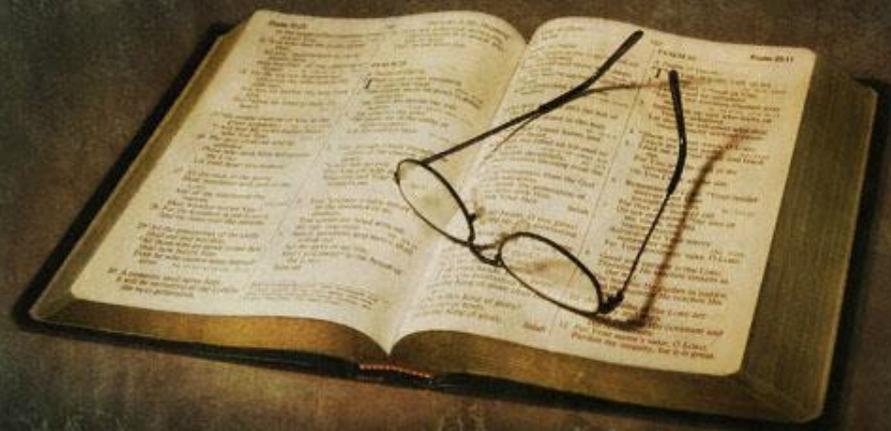
Reading a story is different than reading a legal document. A child reads not in the same way an adult does. A lawyer may understand the same text different than a theologian does. Reading in the original language is not the same as reading a translation.

All those—and even more—factors influence the interpretation of a text. This can be applied to the Bible too. No one can read the Bible in an absolutely neutral way. Then, how can we interpret the Bible correctly?

➔ What may influence our interpretation?

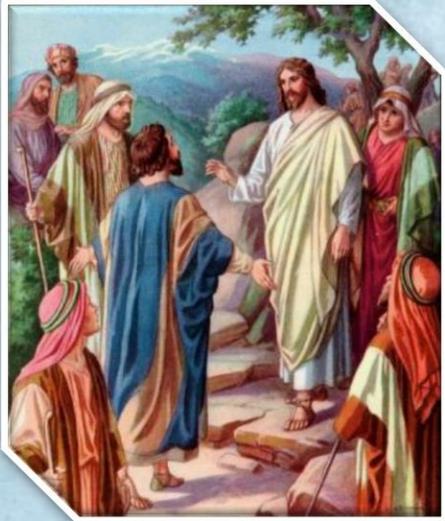
- ➔ Presuppositions
- ➔ Translations
- ➔ Cultural experience
- ➔ Sin

➔ Why is interpretation needed?



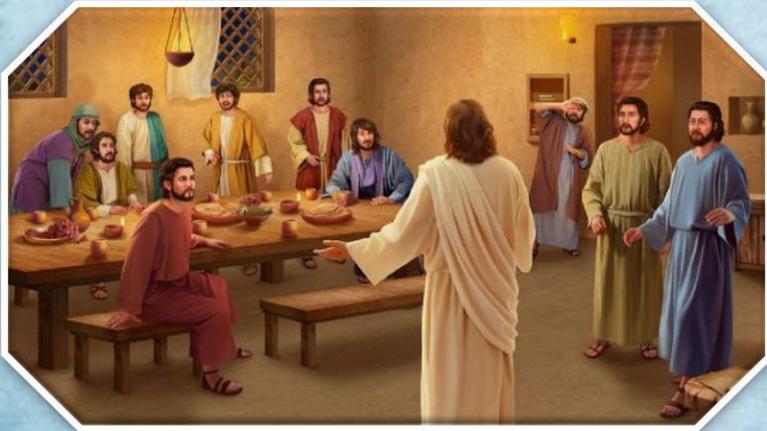
PRESUPPOSITIONS

"But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel." (Luke 24:21)



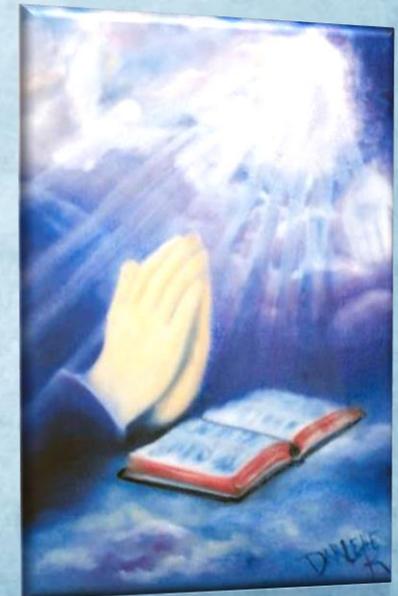
For three and a half years, the followers of Jesus believed that He was the Messiah (Matthew 16:15-16). However, they conceived the idea of the Messiah in a distorted way, because they presupposed His work was to free them from the Romans.

This presupposition prevented them from recognizing Jesus just after He was resurrected (Luke 24:36-45). The Holy Spirit had to work in their minds to show them the true mission of Jesus in the light of the Bible.



We may also be influenced by our experience, our knowledge and our presuppositions when interpreting the Bible.

The Holy Spirit will help us understanding the Bible correctly if we open our mind to Him with an honest heart.



TRANSLATIONS

"If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God." (1 Corinthians 14:27-28)

The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. If we cannot read those languages fluently, we need a translation.

Translations involve two main issues: the original words may not have an exact translation into our language, and the translator may be influenced by preconceived ideas.



Because of those limitations, reading different translations is recommendable, so we can understand the meaning of the original text better.

No matter which translation we read, the fundamental truths of the Scriptures are always easily understandable.



HEBREW

ARAMAIC

GREEK

TRANSLATIONS

There are three types of Bible translations:



Formal

- It's faithful to the original. Almost-literal translation
- "Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.'" (John 2:4 NKJV)



Dynamic

- It emphasizes the meaning. Idiomatic translation
- "'Woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.'" (John 2:4 NIV)



Paraphrase

- Expresses the idea in a colloquial way. More interpreted than literal
- "'I can't help you now,' he said. 'It isn't yet my time for miracles.'" (John 2:4 TLB)

The two last types are more pleasant when reading them and when trying to understand easy passages. However, they're influenced by preconceptions, so they're not good for doctrinal study. A more formal translation is recommended in that case.

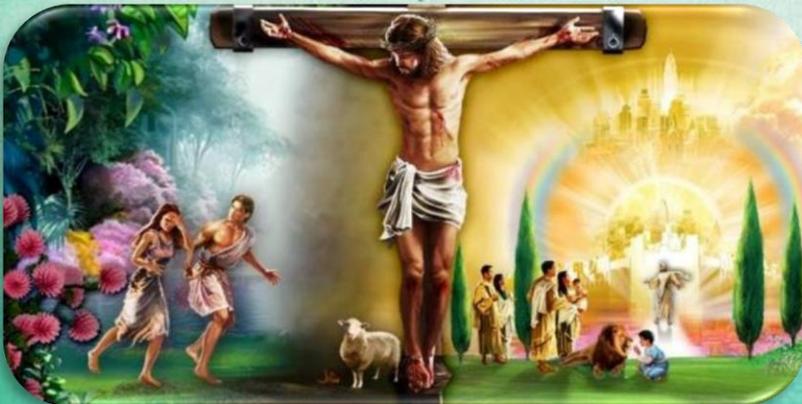
CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

"... visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me," (Exodus 20:5)



The Bible authors were immersed in diverse cultures: Hebrew, Chaldean, Greek, Roman. Therefore, their writings are better understood when taking their cultural context into account.

For example, in the Hebrew culture, a person is responsible for those acts that he didn't do, but allowed to happen. That's why sometimes they attributed acts to God that He didn't actually do, like allowing the children to suffer for their parents' sin, or hardening the heart of Pharaoh.



Nevertheless, even if we don't know about the details of those cultures, the Bible is still full of meaning for us. It explains topics that go beyond any culture, like God's Creation, sin and why we need Salvation.

SIN

"Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.'" (John 9:41)



Sin is a barrier between the reader and the Bible. Sin alters the way we interpret and accept the Bible.

We may understand the Scriptures incorrectly because of our pride, self-delusion, doubt, disobedience, loving our own opinion, and many other impediments.

So we must read the Bible with faith and submission. We must be willing to let the Scriptures change us and shape our character.

**The Holy Spirit acts in us if we let Him. Despite our sin, He will guide us "into all truth."
(John 16:13)**



WHY IS INTERPRETATION NEEDED?

**"Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."
(Luke 24:45 NIV)**

If we approach and interpret the Bible wrongly, we will likely come to false conclusions, not just in the understanding of salvation but in everything else that the Bible teaches.

A correct interpretation of the Bible produces:

- Unity in doctrine**
- Unity in teaching**
- Unity in the Church**
- Unity in mission**

We need a proper study of the Bible (hermeneutics). We should analyze each passage in its specific context, and in relation to what other sections of the Bible teach on the topic at hand. This way we'll better understand the message God has shared with us through the Bible.



“Do you ask, What shall I do to be saved? You must lay your preconceived opinions, your hereditary and cultivated ideas, at the door of investigation. If you search the Scriptures to vindicate your own opinions, you will never reach the truth. Search in order to learn what the Lord says. If conviction comes as you search, if you see that your cherished opinions are not in harmony with the truth, do not misinterpret the truth in order to suit your own belief, but accept the light given. Open mind and heart that you may behold wondrous things out of God’s word.”