

Rightly Dividing God's Word

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For Discussion: Are We Listening?: Rightly Dividing God's Prophetic Word

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Why are there differences of opinion over the question of there being a Millennial Kingdom?

It comes down to how a person regards the Bible... is it the inerrant Word of God or is it a work of man subject to human interpretation.

- If you regard the Bible as inerrant, you will take it literally and conclude that premillennial perspective is correct.
- If the Bible is subject to human interpretation, you will be amillennial or post-millennial.

How do amillennialists justify their perspective?

Amillennialists have the expectation that any prophecy dealing with Jesus' Second Coming should be spiritualized.

- This is despite the fact that the First Advent prophecies were all fulfilled literally.

What do post-millennial advocates believe?

They elevate the role of the Church to the point that they believe the Church will usher in a golden age of peace, righteousness, and holiness on the earth.

How are the post-millennialists beliefs naive?

They forget that while those godly characteristics should mark individual Christians and the Bride of Christ as a whole, the still-unrestrained Devil will continue to deceive and devour until Christ commands that he be confined for 1,000 years.

What is the difference between "human interpretation" and biblically correct interpretation?

It is the difference between proper and flawed hermeneutics...

- exegesis – drawing the intended meaning out of a text through careful analysis of its original context.
- eisegesis – reading one's own ideas, biases, or assumptions into a text, distorting its original message

Why is a correct understanding of God's Word important for each of us?

2 Timothy 2:15 – *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

We will be judged for how we handled God's Word.

Rightly dividing it is interpreting it correctly. Each passage only has one correct meaning and we need to do our proper due diligence to understand it.

- While each passage only has one correct meaning, there can be multiple applications for it.

How should Scripture be interpreted?

We should observe a few basic principles of hermeneutics which is a systematic process for proper biblical interpretation. The context is critical to correctly interpret Scripture... historical, textual, and doctrinal.

- historical perspective – we need to consider what a passage meant to the original people it was written to... that meaning does not change with time.
- textual perspective – the meaning of a passage must be consistent with the text that surrounds it.
- doctrinal perspective – you will not find a passage of Scripture that teaches something that contradicts what is taught elsewhere in Scripture.

Another critical practice for properly interpreting Scripture is to take it literally as much as possible.

- If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense or you'll end up with nonsense.

Why is biblical inerrancy considered to be controversial?

- There are a number of doctrines in Scripture that clash too radically with the culture if the Bible is considered to be inerrant.
- Most churches make liberal interpretations of the Bible allegorizing Genesis, Revelation, and selected doctrines in-between.

Why is it important to consider the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God?

- If the Bible isn't inerrant, its authority is suspect and people have to depend more on human interpreters... it

raises up human intermediaries and diminishes our personal relationship with God.

- If the Bible isn't inerrant, it causes us to depend more on our own feelings and gives us license to compromise with the culture.
- If the Bible isn't inerrant, our understanding of God is diminished... if God is truly Almighty, He is Almighty enough to accurately bring mankind His inerrant Word even using His flawed subjects.

Is there any special significance in the warning near the end of the Bible?

Revelation 22:18-19 – *For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

It sounds like the consequences for not heeding this warning is pretty severe so we should do our due diligence to make sure we have a correct understanding of Scripture.

About what specifically does Revelation 22:18-19 warn us?

Don't add to or take away from what is revealed in the book of Revelation.

What are the consequences for not heeding this warning?

Suffering the plagues of this book... going through the Tribulation, going to the lake of fire, missing out on eternal life with Jesus.

What is the Book of Life?

This is the record of who have received Jesus as Savior and Lord and thus will be spending eternity with Him.

Does this mean a person can lose his salvation since, "God shall take away his part from the Book of Life"?

- No, it can't mean that because that would contradict so many other passages that guarantee the eternal security of believers (like Romans 8:37-39).
- So, a better way to state this is that God will take away the person's opportunity to be in the Book of Life.

What is a classic example of what has routinely been added to or taken away from the book of Revelation?

How about the doctrine of the Millennial Kingdom...

Rev 20:4 – *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received*

his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

The context for this is after Jesus returns to the earth. This cannot be the eternal state because Satan is released at the end of the 1000 years (verse 7) to deceive the nations.

How do deniers of the Millennial Kingdom interpret the 1,000 years referred to in Revelation?

As a long period of time... and say the Millennial Kingdom is the spiritual kingdom of the church age.

How does this view add to or take away from what is revealed in the book of Revelation?

It certainly takes away from the plain-sense meaning that Jesus will be ruling on earth for 1,000 years prior to the Eternal State.

Why is this a problem here? Why does it matter that there is a physical Millennial Kingdom or that this just represents either the spiritual kingdom of the church age or the eternal state?

- Not taking God at His Word is an act of disobedience and it is part and parcel of only taking God's Word superficially.
- It is a symptom of having an erroneous view of God and His Word... AND THIS IS SPIRITUALLY DANGEROUS!
- It limits how close we can grow personally to God... unless you consider and appreciate the details in God's Word, you'll never get past just a superficial understanding of God and His ways.
- It is critical for correctly understanding Bible prophecy, and thus obey Jesus' command to watch for Him (Matthew 24:42).

So, is pre-millennialism an essential?

- It may be if it is linked to inerrancy of Scripture; God in Rev 22:18-19 certainly cautioned us to take His Word literally... If you do that, you have to conclude that Premillennialism is a true doctrine (just like the Trinity).
- Not believing Premillennialism is evidence that you don't consider Scripture to be inerrant. This means your theology diverges from the Almighty, Sovereign Creator-Savior-God He represents Himself as in Scripture.
- Personal opinion... while not believing Premillennialism may be an indicator of not embracing inerrancy, in most cases it is just an indicator of being a baby (carnal) Christian.
 - ...not a good state to remain in. Those who want to grow in their relationship with the Lord will do the due diligence to learn doctrines that God considers important.

Why should teachers be especially careful to not teach error?

James 3:1 – *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.* (ESV)

When I stand before Jesus at the Bema Seat Judgment... I'd rather be found wrong for teaching what the Bible says than be found wrong claiming the Bible means something other than what it says.

Is there a principle here in Revelation 22:18-19 that applies beyond the book of Revelation to all of Scripture?

If the book of Revelation is supposed to be regarded as inerrant, then why shouldn't all of Scripture be likewise regarded?

- The principle here then is that all that God has revealed to us in Scripture should be regarded as inerrant.

Why else should we regard the Bible to be inerrant?

Because it claims to be...

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

The Scripture which we know today as the Holy Bible is from God... it was written by men who inspired to write what they wrote by God, the Holy Spirit.

- The Bible is the Word of God. If the Bible really is from God, it is inerrant because God does not make mistakes.

So, how should we regard Scripture if we recognize that it ultimately came from God?

We should use it for "*teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness*" for the purpose of equipping God's people for doing good works. The prerequisite for honoring God in our good works is to know Him.

What is the importance of God's people doing good works?

Our good works have no value for salvation but it pleases our Lord when we do good things for others with an attitude of gratitude for what Jesus did for us. And God can use these good works to extend His kingdom.

Wasn't the Bible written by imperfect men who could not help but introduce deviations from God's inspiration?

Such a perspective reveals a limited view of our Omnipotent Creator-God. God is Almighty enough to have

accurately given us His Word and preserved it through time even using His flawed servants.

- If God is powerful enough that His will be done even though mankind has a free will to oppose Him, then God can and has made sure that we have His inerrant revelation to mankind as 2 Timothy 3:16 proclaims.

What is the danger in not applying correct interpretive techniques to the Bible?

- Mostly these false doctrines are non-essentials but left unchecked, they can lead to people embracing fundamental errors like salvation-by-works and universalism.
- The greatest problem with not appreciating the inerrancy of Scripture, is that the desire to go deep into God's Word is lost. If there is any doubt the Bible really means what it says, why spend much time on it?

What problems come from a superficial treatment of God's Word?

1 Cor 3:1-3 – *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal.*

Those who only pay lip-service to the inerrancy of Scripture generally stick to what is pretty obvious and safe for them to talk about. They stick to superficial issues and never get into the solid food of the Word that more mature Christians hunger for.

- Such "Gospel-lite" preaching contributes to church members becoming lukewarm toward Christ.
- Not studying the whole Word of God in sufficient depth to challenge spiritual growth keeps Christians dumbed-down or as carnal babes in Christ.

OK, so what? What application we should make for doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture?

We need to regard the Bible as God's unadulterated (inerrant) Word.

- It is the Bible that reveals to the world the provision God made for eternal life; that Jesus Christ paid the penalty of our sins when He died on the cross. And that we are forgiven if we trust in Him and Him alone. We as children of God have the awesome privilege of helping others know that Truth.