

had chosen to be guided by false prophets and God simply permitted him to be guided by these prophets to his ruin.”

Exegetical Commentary. Isaiah 45:7

“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.”

Their comments

Evil Hebrew *Rá*, which may mean either moral evil that springs from within or trouble that comes upon one from without. Here is used in the latter sense (See Isaiah 47:11; Amos 3:6) God is the author of “light” and “peace”. He permits “evil” whether moral or material, that men and angels may witness the result of a departure from the eternal principles of right (see Dan. 4:17). In scripture God is often represented as causing that which he does not prevent (see 2 Chronicles 18:18)

Exegetical Commentary on 2 Chronicles 18:18

“¹⁸ Again he said, Therefore hear the word of the Lord; I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left.”

Their Comments

“I saw. This is a parabolic vision and must be interpreted as such. In it God is represented as doing that which He does not restrain. God does not coerce the will. When evil men willfully choose to follow deception He does not intervene.

Since God is supreme, His refusal to restrain the forces of evil is represented as though He directly sends the evil. An example may be found in the incident of the fiery serpents (Numbers 21:4-9). According the narrative as related by Moses, “the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people” (Num. 21:6).

However those “fiery serpents” were not suddenly created or miraculously transported from some other region for the occasion; they already infested the wilderness area through which the children of Israel were travelling and would have been a

source of real danger and the cause of frequent deaths had not God, by a miracle, subdued those venomous reptiles. But when the people turned against God who protected them from many hazards of the desert, God simply withdrew His protection and death was the result (see pp 429). Thus it was in the case of Ahab. Satan was already at work, through the agency of the false prophets and God simply did not prevent the course the king had chosen for himself.”

Calvinist theology and the KJV

The King James Bible was translated by forty-seven scholars from the original Hebrew and Greek into English. It was published in 1611. It was ordered by King James the 1st of England. King James believed in Calvinistic theology as well as those translators of the 1611 Bible. Calvinistic theology says, God exercises complete control over the affairs of the universe in which there is no free will. God not only meets out the punishment for sin, but actually predestines, controls and ensures that sin is done. Hence the King James translators translates verbs in the causative sense instead of the permissive sense.

The historical evidence leaves no doubt that Calvinism was the primary theological perspective that was inserted into this translation. It fails to see the particular culture idioms and language style into account.

SUMMARY

Seventh Day Adventist doctrinal system is built on sound principles of interpreting. Ellen White lived the experience in its development. It is no wonder therefore that from her inspired pen she has given biblical principles that when applied, the student of scripture will extract the beautiful gems that lay hidden.

“There are truths in the word which are like veins of precious ore concealed beneath the surface. By digging for them, as the man digs for gold and silver, the hidden treasures are discovered.” (FE 390.2)

Yours in the triumph of the third angel's message.

What is hermeneutics?

Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting literary documents. It is the study of the writings of secular and inspired writers such as Moses, Paul and Ellen White.

There are rules or principles that must be applied to scripture for us to understand its meaning.

Ellen White noted the need for hermeneutics when she said:

“Let us in imagination go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of Jesus **MEANT** to **those** who heard them, **we** may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for **ourselves** their **deeper** lessons.” MB pg. 12

Here we are advised to study what the words “meant” in 30 AD and understand what they “mean” **to us today** and in doing so we gather their “deeper” meaning for us **today**.

Interspersed throughout her writings, there are many practical and insightful principles on our approach to scripture which we will look at. Then we will examine the more technical principles she penned.

GENREAL GUIDELINES OF INTREPRETATION

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide in the study

The Holy Spirit who inspired the bible writers, is the same Holy Spirit needed to understand it correctly.

“A true knowledge of the Bible can be gained only through the aid of that Spirit by whom the word was given.” Ed. Pg. 189

Be willing to obey the truth

“Whenever men are not seeking, in word and deed, to be in harmony with God, then however learned they may be, they are liable to err in their understanding of scripture, and it is not safe to trust to their explanations.” 5T 705

Be Open – Minded

“The student of the bible must be open-minded, willing to surrender previously held opinions. 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.” (COL pg. 112)

Use Common Sense

“We are to be guided by true theology and common sense.” (C.T pg. 275)

For example in Exodus 20: v15 “*You shall not steal*”, it means literally do not steal. However when we read in Matthew 5: v29 “²⁹ *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*” Common sense tell us this is not be taken literally.

The context of v29 is related to verse 28. Jesus states, “*whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*” Jesus goes behind the act itself to the source of the origin of sin which are the thoughts. Therefore “the right eye” is a symbol which represents the avenue where sin gains an entrance at the level of the thinking. Therefore to pluck out the right eye is to banish evil thoughts when momentarily they flash to our consciousness, thereby avoiding the development of a habitual thought pattern that conditions the mind to commit sin when the opportunity presents itself.

The Self-Interpretation of Scripture

“The Bible is its own expositor. One passage will prove to be a key that will unlock other passages, and in this way light will be shed upon the hidden meaning of the word. By comparing different texts treating on the same subject, viewing their bearing on every side, the true meaning of the Scriptures will be made evident.” (FE pg. 187)

For example:

The word “cleansed” in Daniel 8:14 is from the Hebrew word “Tsadaq”. But the same word Tsadaq is also translated in other portions of scripture by other words as with a legal or courtroom setting.

Job 13:18 “Behold now, I have ordered my cause (case) I know that I shall be justified (tsadaq) KJV

The word “cause” ties to a litigation context. It means a case as in law suit. This verse breathes a courtroom setting and judicial procedure resulting in acquittal or exoneration.

ISAIAH 43:26 “[put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare your case, that thou mayest be justified.” (WEB) (tsadaq)

This is courtroom language, involving the presentation of the case and looking toward acquittal or vindication.

A Classic Case

Deuteronomy 25:v1 “If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.”

Here again in this verse of scripture, the word translated justify is from the Hebrew word Tsadaq and it is found in the middle of courtroom setting.

Here we see a judicial process. An issue is contested, witnesses heard, evidence weighed, a verdict reached and the pronouncement of the verdict. Deut. 25 v1 is classic, because of its local, cosmic and eschatological application.

The study of Tsadaq translated in Daniel 8:14 as “cleansed” vindicates the SDA position that it involves judgement or a judicial review in the middle of a courtroom proceeding.

Other parallel references Genesis 38:26; Psalm 82:1-3, Genesis 44:16; 2 Samuel 15:4

Ellen White recognized the differences in time, in background and individual characteristics among the bible writers, yet perceived an overall unity of scripture.

Scholars and theologians call this analogy. She says that different texts, speaking to the same topic, should be brought together to provide a complete picture of what the bible has to say on a particular topic.

She states

“The Creator of all ideas may impress different minds with the same thought, but each may express it in a different way, yet without contradiction.” (ISM pg. 22.1)

She further states

“Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony. (ISM 25.3)

“As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life.” (ISM 25.4)

The Historical Context

Ellen G. White understood the importance of the historical and the cultural setting of scripture.

“An understanding of the customs of those who lived in Bible times, of the location and time of events, is practical knowledge; for it aids in making clear the figures of the Bible and in bringing out the force of Christ’s lessons.” (CT518.3)

Hebrew Idioms

An idiom is a phrase or expression whose meaning cannot be understood from the ordinary meaning of the words in it. For example, “Get off my back!” is an idiom meaning “Stop bothering me!” The idiom, “You hit the nail on the head”. means, “You are exactly right”.

Each culture has its idioms – way of expressing language.

The Biblical Research Institute of the SDA Church is the Theological Consultant Department to the General Conference and the Worldwide Church. Its main functions are Biblical Research and apologetics. Their book entitled, “Understanding Scripture – An Adventist Approach”, goes into extensive detail on the development of Seventh Day Adventism on hermeneutics from the Millerite period to current. They like Ellen White understand the important principle of the cultural context specifically, Hebrew idiomatic language.

They state,

The bible writers lived in Near Eastern Culture. In Hebrew culture a person is deemed to be the cause of a particular activity but in our culture we would say he permitted or did not restrain the thing from happening. Hence we have Hebrew permissive and causative idioms.

“A background knowledge of Near Easter Culture is indispensable for understanding such expressions as “the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh” (Ex. 9:12) Hebrew culture attributed to an individual for acts he did not commit, but that he allowed to happen. Therefore the inspired writers of the scriptures commonly credit God with doing actively that which in western thought, we would say He permits or does not prevent from happening.

Another aspect of scripture that troubles the modern minds is the divine command to engage in war and execute nations.” (pg. 335-336)

Those who oppose the true understanding of the character of God would be well advised to listen to the theologians and scholars and even more importantly the pen of Inspiration.

It would appear that the current majority of SDA are not aware of what *the Bible Research Institute* have said on this principle. Their book entitled “Understanding Scripture – An Adventist Approach” highlights this concept. They may be shocked this hermeneutic is found in the Standard exegetical SDA Commentary.

Seventh Day Adventist Theological Bible Commentary

This is the standard Exegetical and Expository commentary on the entire bible. It consists of Seven Volumes with thirty-five contributors including M. L. Andreason, A. Graham Maxwell, George McCrandy Price to name a few.

The contributors well understood this Hebrew Permissive Idiom. This is consistently cited in their exegetical analysis of passages where God is seen as doing things that he permits.

Exegetical Commentary 1 Kings 22:22, 23 SDA BC Vol 2 pg. 840

“²²And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

²³ Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.”

Their comment:

“A lying spirit. In the bible, God is frequently presented as doing that which He does not restrain. The who picture is a parable. Ahab