

# Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

VOLUME XIV

JANUARY 1994

NUMBER 6

## Interpretation Considerations

By  
Jackie M. Stearsman

Interpretation is a word we hear often today among those advocating drastic changes for the Lord's cause. The old word conveying this concept was Hermeneutics and we are being told today that we need a new hermeneutic. Why is there such a need? Is it not because those advocating radical change know they must have a "rational justification" for what they are championing? It is one thing to advocate change; it is another thing to justify those changes. If the radical changes could be justified by ordinary means there would be no call for a "new hermeneutic" but, since they can not be justified then there must be some rationale justifying the radical positions.

We have heard of a "new hermeneutic" for some years now but those preaching it do not have it developed as yet. The best they have to offer is total confusion. Absolute subjectivity—unity in

diversity—which is not unity but diversity. The preachers of unity in diversity are unwilling to accept their own "hermeneutic" because they will not advocate all diversity. They select who they run with and what road they travel. Thus the end result is mere subjectivism, with every person doing what he wants and no objective reference to sanction the action.

### Using a Dictionary

We might assume that people understand how to use a dictionary but this is not always true. One of the often used ploys of those teaching error is to select from a dictionary a meaning of a word (most words have a variety of ideas conveyed by them depending on the context of usage) that suits a preconceived idea and then read into a given context that meaning. This abuse will be shown later in more detail.

If you have reared children or remember your early school experience you will know that a word must be defined in a given context. For example, what does the word box mean? The dictionary I am consulting now has the following: (1) an evergreen shrub, (2) a container usually with 4 sides and a cover, and (3) a slap, a fight with the fists. It takes no special genius to use a dictionary or to

### Questions

1. What is hermeneutics?
2. Why do we need a new one?
3. Who says we need a new one?
4. Who authorized the advocates to produce a new one?
5. How will we know the new one is better?
6. Have men in the past all been wrong on their hermeneutics?
7. Do we need a new hermeneutic to understand who Jesus is?
8. Can the new hermeneutic be explained in the language of the old hermeneutic?

understand the meaning of words. When honest people consult reference tools they will be helped to unite in comprehension not divide into factional groups calling for a "new hermeneutic." Only in religion do people act so foolish. When the wish is father to the thought most anything is possible if permitted.

### Examples Of Misapplication

#### 1.

##### Subjection

Let us consider how some misuse terms as we have cited above. What does the term "subject" mean? As stated above until we see it in context we are only guessing. Here is a passage to consider: "because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be;" (Rom. 8:7 ASV). What do we understand when we read this verse? Are we to understand that the sinner can not submit to the will of God? Then why preach? Are we to understand that the sinner is not to obey God? Then why preach? A careful reading of this verse in its context in Romans will show that the sinner (persisting in his rebellion can not obey God, cannot submit to God while practicing sinning). This is why repentance is demanded of all. We must repent, stop rebellion against God, if we are to submit to Him.

Some take this verse and read a part of it "Is not subject to the law of God" and say this is God's will for marriage to those not Christians. Such is to abuse the basic idea of intelligent treatment of words. We would not be respected by others if we so treated their words. Let a person take any letter you have received lately, decide what he wants the letter to

mean, go to the dictionary and select the definition, ignore the context of the word and insert into that letter his meaning. In no other field but religion will men be considered honest and sane by so conducting themselves.

#### 2.

##### Bondage

"Yet if the unbelieving departeth, let him depart: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us in peace" (I Cor. 7:15). Some wishing to have justification to put away a marriage companion by not following Matthew 19:9 will cite this passage and take the words "not under bondage" to mean that the person is now free to be another persons mate in acceptable marriage before God. Yet the context of the verse will not permit it. What does the next verse mean in such misuse of context? "For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O husband, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" (I Cor. 7:16). Who are these parties that have a wife and husband? How can departing, forming another marriage, be said to save a former husband or wife? Such is the confusion created when we do not follow the meaning of the text before us.

In a more technical way the meaning is forbidden by the original language. The perfect tense of the Greek means the action that has been completed in the past with a present result. In this context the action is negated. What this means is simply this: the person is not now under this type bondage and has never been under such bondage. That this could not refer to the marriage bond should be clear from the same context for in the very same chapter it is stated that a person is bound to a

marriage partner. "A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (I Cor. 7:39).

Ignoring the context or placing into a context a meaning that is not correct results in having Paul and God contradicting themselves. God never did design marriage to be slavery but He did intend for the marriage bond to be lasting.

#### 3.

##### English to Greek

Another way of abusing the text is to read from one language (English) and place into a second language (Greek) the English meaning. From an English dictionary we can find that the word baptism may mean to sprinkle, pour or immerse. We take the meaning we desire and read back into the original a meaning of our choosing. To so act is to demonstrate for one and all that subjectivism is the basis of our action. Our wish, not God's, is the controlling factor.

Some would be scholars often cite English sentences to sanction their wishes. Consider the following: (1) Whoever commits robbery is guilty of a jail sentence. (2) Whoever commits murder is worthy of death. These sentences are said to "prove" that commits is a past action and not one that is continuing in the present time. The

### *The Harvesters*

Published Monthly by the Florida School of  
Preaching 1807 South Florida Avenue, Lakeland,  
Florida 33803 (813) 683-4043  
Editor: Jackie M. Stearsman

#### Board of Directors

Gordon Methvin, President	Maurice Davis
Paul Thornhill, Vice President	Kenneth W. Franklin
J. H. Blackman, Jr., Secretary	George K. French
E. Robert McAnally, Treasurer	Wallace Maxwell
B. C. Carr, Director Emeritus	Dale Spung
Elmer Burgett	Jackie M. Stearsman
Jack D. Cronk	Gene Sulwell

TRAINING PREACHERS SINCE 1969

only reason for so connecting them is to try and avoid the force of the present tense in the Greek in Matthew 19:9 where Jesus says: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 19:9).

We must understand that the force of the present tense in the Greek is continuous action in the present time. The idea of committeth adultery in the Matthew 19:9 passage is continues to commit adultery. Making up an English sentence will not do away with with the force of the original. We must have the original language govern the English meaning. We must not use the English to rewrite the original.

This same thing is done by those not wishing to comply with baptism for the remission of sins in Acts 2:38. They will make up a sentence in English that has "for" or "because" with it pointing to the past—example: the man is in jail for murdering his wife. He is not in jail in order to murder his wife, so the story goes. This does not remove the force of the original. Consider two passages in the Bible translated correctly and using the same Greek to English renderings: "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "For this

## Interpretation

"A person has interpreted the thoughts of another when he has in his own mind a correct reproduction or photograph of the thought as it was conceived in the mind of the original writer or speaker. It is accordingly a purely reproductive process, involving no originality of thought on the part of the interpreter. If the latter adds anything of his own it is *eisegesis* [i.e. to change a text by reading into it what is not there] and not *exegesis* [i.e. to represent a text correctly, not altering it by putting into it your own personal opinions or preconceived ideas]. The moment the Bible student has in his own mind what was in the mind of the author or authors of the Bib.[sic] books when these were written, he has interpreted the thoughts of the Scripture" (G.H. Schodde, "Interpretation," *International Standard Encyclopaedia* III, 1489).

is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). If Jesus did not die because our sins were forgiven then we are not baptized because we are forgiven. If Jesus died in order for us to be forgiven then we are to be baptized in order for us to be forgiven.

To interpret the Bible takes no special intelligence or "gift." If an individual is honest and desires to understand it, he may understand the Bible (John 7:17). Some Men have always misrepresented the Bible; let it not be us (II Pet. 3:14-18; Jer. 23:25-32).



## IN MEMORY of Guy N. Woods

Many were saddened to learn of the death of brother Guy N. Woods, December 8, 1993. The influence of brother Woods was extensive in life and will not end by his death. He has helped to shape the thinking of many brethren and by his writing of commentaries and for brotherhood publications his impact will continue.

Brother Woods was a great preacher, writer, editor, and Christian friend. His encouragement to me has meant much. Under his oversight I wrote the Annual Lesson Commentary for the Gospel Advocate Company for three years. I discontinued this when I came to work full time with the school. The last time I saw him in person was when Bell Shoales

honored him and at that time he was commending me in my writing. We shall miss him and are grateful to God that our paths crossed. Our life is better for having spiritually traveled in his fellowship.



## Lectureship News

When you receive this the time for the Annual Florida School Of Preaching Lectureship will be upon us. Hope to see you here. All is looking great. We have an excellent theme and a number of faithful speakers. Do not miss it.

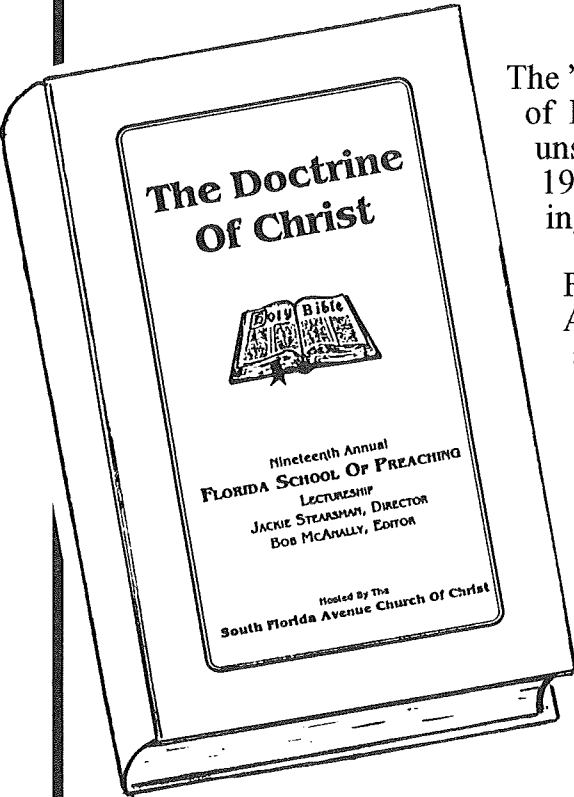
If we can be of help call the office:

(813) 683-4043.



# 1994 Lectureship Book

—*Silver Anniversary Edition*—



The '93-'94 school year marks a special milestone for the Florida School of Preaching. This is its 25th year of training men to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Since its establishment in September 1969 the school has enjoyed good success in preparing and encouraging men in this great work.

For many years the school has been blessed with an outstanding Annual Bible Lectureship. One of the suggestions that has come year after year is that it should be put in book form for wider distribution. Lack of finances made that impossible. However, in view of this being our 25th year and the importance of the lectureship theme "*The Doctrine of Christ*" the board decided to put forth this volume as our Silver Anniversary Edition.

The book contains approximately 500 pages with the the full text of each lecture professionally typeset in an excellent hardback binding. This book will be a valuable addition to your library and a great help in studying and defending the truth.

Price —  
**\$12.00**

To receive your copy of the lectureship volume send \$12.00 plus \$2.25 for postage and handling.

Mail to:

FLORIDA SCHOOL OF PREACHING — 1807 South Florida Avenue — Lakeland, FL 33803

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

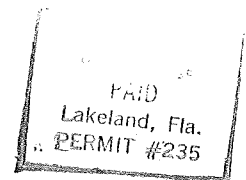
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

# of copies \_\_\_\_\_ Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## FLORIDA SCHOOL OF PREACHING

1807 SOUTH FLORIDA AVENUE  
LAKELAND, FLORIDA 33803-2653

**DIRECTOR:** Jackie M. Stearsman  
Phone (813) 683-4043



*Address Correction Requested*