

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: The Scripture and Extra-biblical resources****The Scripture and Extra-biblical resources - posted by havok20x, on: 2014/6/18 14:30**

We are discussing in one thread about the atonement, and we started to talk about using extra-biblical resources in our aid to interpret scripture.

Is that a good practice?

My understanding is that the Scriptures are self-contained and do not need anything added to them to aid in our Holy-Spirit-guided understanding of what they mean, assuming that we have them in a copy of our own language.

I am not saying let's ignore commentary or anything like that. I am just saying that if our understanding about what is meant in a passage is altered by cultural context, experience, etc then I have ventured into dangerous territory.

The question I posed was "Could a man in Swaziland that had nothing but the Holy Spirit and a Bible come to the same conclusions that we do about what certain passages mean."

Any thoughts would be appreciated.

Re: The Scripture and Extra-biblical resources - posted by dolfan (), on: 2014/6/18 22:23

Yes, the man in Swaziland could if the Spirit enlightened him accordingly.

The Scripture is inspired by God and it is good and useful for what is right, what is wrong, how to get right and how to stay right.

It is helpful to use extra biblical resources. When I read about the lukewarm church, it helps me to understand the water works history of Laodicea. It is not vital that I do, though.

When translators work, the restatement of words into another language must account for the knowledge base and culture of the target language. We trust that the Holy Spirit is at work in this, and it really should be a matter of prayer now. But, as He is working, He is also making sufficient that translation for the purposes He sends His word forth to reach.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/6/18 22:56

Certain scriptures, particularly Paul's letters, were written to real persons or churches for real reasons pertinent to them in their day. That is not to say they are not helpful and useful to us today. But I think we need to know the context of why Paul was writing.

In the other thread I mentioned women wearing hats in church. I was only half joking because that is a perfect example of why context is important.

A plain reading of that passage requires women to wear a head covering in church. So every Christian woman today who does not wear a hat to church better have a good reason. I think they do but I would not get this from scripture. You have to get to the culture of the day to figure this out.

In the OT, scripture doesn't really describe just how bad the Canaanites were so many people don't understand God's command to wipe out man woman and child. But if you research just how detestable they were it is much easier to understand. Until I heard the details about exactly how they sacrificed their babies I struggled some with that. But not anymore.

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2014/6/19 0:30

Quote:

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A plain reading of that passage requires women to wear a head covering in church. So every Christian woman today who does not wear a hat to church better have a good reason. I think they do but I would not get this from scripture. You have to get to the culture of the day to figure this out.

I do not want to get into the discussion of the need for head covering as it is very sensitive here. I believe it as a command and cannot be ignored. My point in post is to say that a command like head covering cannot be ignored as cultural thing.

I can accept if a woman says that "I understand the spiritual aspect of this head covering command which is to have a submissive spirit. Since I believe I have one towards my husband, I do not find a reason to cover my head as an external sign." This logic is valid, though I do not agree with it personally. I do not judge them because they believe they are following the spirit of this command rather than taking it literally. My faith is all women should take it both literally and spiritually as well. But my faith is only enforced on my wife and my daughter.

I find it foolish for a person to say this head covering command is cultural, because Paul clearly says that head covering as a sign for angels. Angels do not have cultures like us. If it was as a sign for other men then at least there is a minor loophole in this command to bring in cultural thing. Hence I find all the arguments like in those days only Prostitutes did not cover the heads to attract men etc are absolutely foolish.

There are certain places where we can put cultural context, like greeting one another with holy kiss. This is just the way of greeting in those time. Judas greeted Jesus with kiss! though there was nothing holy in it. In US we greet with a hand shake, in India we do Namaskar with hands to greet one another in Church. The point is not how exactly you greet, it is about greeting and welcoming one another. I have met a brother in US who always kissed me to greet me. I never returned the favor but just shook his hands. I do not judge him either.

Coming to the point of this post, if we start ignoring commands based on culture it was given then we can also ignore commands like 'do not lust with your eyes', because in those days there was no pornography but now with such legal ways of watching another woman naked, such commands are not applicable. May it never be. Let the Lord himself protect us from all forms of deception.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/6/19 6:16

Sorry havok-

I did not mean to turn this into this sort of discussion because these types of specific issues have all been debated ad infinitum with no satisfactory conclusion.

My main point was that I do believe it is helpful to have some cultural background to better understand some scriptures. Not absolutely essential of course, but helpful.

Sree- I understand and appreciate your sentiments.

Re: The Scripture and Extra-biblical resources - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2014/6/19 15:29

I would say absolutely, context is not just cultural but spiritual and political. Knowing why something was said and to whom it was been spoken helps us make accurate application now.

Some parts of scripture are not necessarily written to us but for us.

Re: The Scripture and Extra-biblical resources - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2014/6/20 12:58

QUOTE:

"Could a man in Swaziland that had nothing but the Holy Spirit and a Bible come to the same conclusions that we do about what certain passages mean."

My answer to this is "yes."

Our pastor shared the testimony of a well lettered evangelist, with degrees from prestigious universities, say that he is amazed at the insights of people with as little as an 8th grade education who are Bible scholars and have the Holy Spirit teaching them, come to the same conclusion as he who knows Greek, etc.

I agree.

Too many times we are intimidated by well educated scholars thinking they have greater insights into the mind of the LORD than those of us with less education. Yet, too many times their skill lies in discrediting the WORD and since they make such well reasoned arguments for their interpretation we fall for their philosophies.

As far as whether we must consider culture in how a portion is interpreted I suggest that if it is important the Holy Spirit will have included it in the WORD. As an example of Him doing so is the OT. It was only after studying the OT law seriously, in depth, could I ever understand the concepts of sacrifice, obedience, the amazing power and authority of God as taught in the NT.

My understanding on this issue.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2014/6/20 13:44

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I agree, totally. I marvel at how awesome God is to have created something like the Scriptures. I can't write a paragraph without it being riddled with errors...lol

Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2014/6/20 13:54

As I was thinking about this post and my response, I felt like I missed the mark in not quoting the scripture that would prove how substantial the WORD is.

Here we go: 1Peter 1:1-8 (NASB)

1 To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,

6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,
7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Aren't you thrilled that one does not have to be born to a certain family, culture, country or attend certain schools in order to understand the WORD? I am. Lack of understanding rests upon our own will. If we think we are running short all we have to do is ask for an infusion of grace to enable us to love the WORD and its Giver. God loves to answer these kind of prayers.

Re: , on: 2014/6/20 14:54

Seems to me the early church did quite nicely without commentaries. All they had was the Holy Spirit.

Matter of fact that is all the persecuted church has, the Holy Spirit.

Bearnaster

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/6/20 15:22

No one is saying that the Word isn't awesome or that you have to be a rocket scientist to understand it.

The question on the table is whether external sources can be helpful in our study of the scriptures. I'd be willing to wager that each of our favorite Bible teachers has a fairly extensive library and it's not entirely composed of Bibles.

Why do we all have to be so high and mighty about this? Why can't we just be honest and say " yes, extra biblical sources can be helpful? It's not a sin to say that for goodness sake.

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2014/6/20 17:07

Let me give a good example of what I am talking about:

1 Clement (which is not scripture) talks about the resurrection in Chapters 25 and 26. He uses some historical "facts" to back up his claims--namely that there is a bird called the Phoenix and that every 500 years it dies, is reborn, and returns to Heliopolis. He cites it as evidence for God's ability to resurrect men. He even calls it a "wonderful sign."

Is the resurrection true? You bet! Has God proven through His creative work that the resurrection is true? Definitely. Is God without power to complete it? Most certainly not.

However, clement has successfully discredited himself by laying hold of that historical claim and citing it is evidence.

One of the best examples I can share with you is from Matthew 5:13, "You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his flavor, with which shall it be salted? it is thereafter good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

Now, a man from Swaziland is going to read the surrounding text and come to the conclusion that he wants to be a Christian that is salt and light.

However, let's look at uses of salt back in that culture that don't necessarily fit in with our current understanding of salt... Some of these I have heard. Some I am just making up on the fly (although using historical facts)

1) The Rub-Off Salt plank. Back in the day, they would take drift wood from the dead sea and use it to salt their food by rubbing it on said food. Once it ran out of saltiness, they would throw it on their roof and men would walk on it. Interpretation: Don't let other people rub off on you and cause you to lose your saltiness.

2) The salt-rocks. Apparently, there are rocks that are partially composed with salt and then composed with other mat

erials. Once the salt is used up out of the rock, the remainder is useless. Interpretation: You can't be mixed with the world. You have to be pure salt in order to be affective.

3) The Jewish sacrificial salt. This salt was included in sacrifices and if it was missing, was not acceptable. Interpretation: If we are not salty, as Christians, we are unacceptable sacrifices to God.

4) The romans would sprinkle salt on enemy territory to prevent anything from growing. Interpretation: As the salt of the earth, we should be preventing the enemy from thriving.

5) Salt is tasty, and necessary for life. Interpretation: As Christians, we should be what makes this world worth living in- we should make the world taste good!

etc.

Now, I could plainly read. Or I can read into the Scriptures all this other nonsense that I received from outside of the Scriptures. Isn't that Eisegesis? Maybe I'll get something close. Maybe I'll totally miss the point.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2014/6/20 18:02

But is it not a reasonable question to ask "what does it mean to be the salt of the earth?"

In other words a man from Swaziland might ask "what is so good about salt that Jesus says we should be the salt of the earth?"

The people hearing Jesus probably knew exactly what he meant. But I remember for years reading this passage and not being sure myself. I like salt on popcorn but doc says it's bad for me.

Then I heard or read that salt was used to preserve things back then. It purified. So then it made perfect sense.

I agree that you could come up with all sorts of crazy things like you demonstrated. But Jesus must have had something in mind. He did not specifically state what that was for our benefit and he had no reason to. He was talking to persons in an Iron Age culture 2000 years ago.