

Chapter Eleven

The Tree of Interpretation

Before we examine the Doctrinalist Viewpoint I believe it would be pertinent to interject with this small chapter. I want you to see that there is a unifying factor that connects the various views of Revelation that we have been examining in the previous five chapters, a common denominator that all the different views possess. To coin an old phrase, we might say that they are all tarred with the same brush. That unifying factor is this: each and every conflicting and contradictory understanding is an interpretation of the original text.

Let us broaden that statement: Each of the six different interpretive viewpoints of the Book of Revelation and all the variations contained within each individual basic premise all have but one unifying factor at their core, and that is that they are all interpretations. This multitude of interpretations I have likened to leaves on the branches of a tree which I have called: The Tree of Interpretation.

Let's have a look again at a couple of the Lord's instructions on this subject of interpretation from the Twelve Rules for Handling God's Word.

Rule Number One:

Do not add or take from His Word.

Proverbs 30:6 NKJV

Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

Deuteronomy 12:32 NKJV

Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

1 Corinthians 4:6 NKJV

. . . that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written . . .

WOW. Don't even think beyond what is written.

Rule Number Four:

Do not attempt to interpret God's Word. Simply believe the plain reading.

2 Peter 1:20 NKJV

. . . no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

2 Peter 3:16 NKJV

. . . untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.

Deuteronomy 29:29 NKJV

The secret *things belong* to the Lord our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever,

Obviously there are passages that are highly symbolic and for us to understand the meaning we would have to have an interpretation. However, this is where many people stumble. Attempting to interpret any **vision or dream, metaphoric passage or parable from God's Word that does not have an interpretation given in the Word itself** is a sure way to open the door to private interpretations.

If God hasn't given the meaning in His Word, leave it alone! Remember, it is His prerogative to keep **some things to Himself: "The secret things belong the Lord our God."** For example, when the disciples asked Jesus **about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, He told them it wasn't** for them to know (Acts 1:6-7). It was none of their business and presumably it will become obvious in its own time from what is already written. The important principle to understand is that it is the things that are revealed that are for us. The inverse also needs to be applied: the things that are not revealed in His Word are not for us. Therefore, our correct response is not to interpret His Word.

There is a huge difference between interpreting God's Word and understanding God's Word. People who interpret God's Word are lacking wisdom and consequently are in great need of understanding.

Proverbs 4:7 NKJV

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.

To speculate on the meaning of a symbolic passage of Scripture may be acceptable in some circumstances, provided we do not become dogmatic about our musings and attempt to make doctrine **from it. This tendency to interpret God's Word is THE major stumbling** block to understanding what it is that He actually intends for us to comprehend. As Joseph said when presented with a dream:

Genesis 40:8 NKJV

Do not interpretations belong to God?

To amplify the importance of these instructions from His Word, we have this example of interpreting God's Word presented to us in the **Book of Genesis:**

Genesis 2:8-9 NKJV

The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:15-17 NKJV

Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may

freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Genesis 3:1-5 NKJV

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

In verse 4 we have Satan giving us the first example of an interpretation of what God had said. He claims he knows what God really means and tells Eve his version, which of course is a lie.

Jesus warned us that we would encounter many coming in His name with deceptions when He was teaching about the end of the age. Presumably those who come in His Name are called Christians, or call themselves Christian. Join the dots . . . We have a multitude of Christian teachers and prophecy pundits who have presented to us the multitude of interpretations that we are presently assailed with. Surely this is evidence and positive proof that the deceptions are right here right now. The only reliable interpretation of any biblical vision, dream, metaphor, symbolic statement or parable found in the Word of God is that which conforms: to the words of Jesus given to us in the Gospels; the words of the Apostles; and the actual interpretations found in the Word of God. Everything else is the private interpretation of man. Down inside we know that this is true.

**IT IS WAY PAST TIME TO
LEAVE THE INTERPRETATIONS AND OPINIONS OF MAN
BEHIND AND DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF THAT
THE SCRIPTURES ACTUALLY SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES**

We’ve had six ‘revelations’ of the Book of Revelation: The Historicist; The Preterist; The Futurist; The Idealist; The Literalist and The Universalist; and we have likened the plethora of opinions to leaves on a tree. We saw behind the leaves that there were six branches supported by one trunk. We cut off each branch one by one and eventually felled the entire tree.

Spiritually speaking, the Tree of Interpretation is the inclination of the flesh to follow in the footsteps of Satan and assume the role of interpreter of God’s Word. Interpreting God’s Word was part and parcel of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil that Adam and Eve ate way back there in the Garden. From then on, as descendants of Adam, we have had this tendency whereby we are inclined to lean on our own understanding. When we put this work of the flesh away from ourselves in any area of our thinking, then and only then can a truly biblical understanding spring forth in our consciousness. In other areas of our life, if we are truly walking with the Lord, we have already intuitively walked along **this path: it’s called repentance. This is not just an intellectual exercise, in fact it is entirely spiritual. At**

this point in time it would be pertinent to pray that this evil influence be destroyed and removed from our hearts. Amen.

Now it's time to look at the Doctrinalist and their viewpoint. As we all know, it is the root that supports the tree and most trees will sprout again if the root is not dealt with. The Doctrinalist is carrying a large two edged sword on which is written on both sides of the blade: **Twelve Rules for Handling God's Word**. The Sword of the Lord is the Word of God, and the Doctrinalist actually believes that when the **Truth of God's Word is the** only interpreter of the writings of John of Patmos, it becomes an axe that can then be laid to the very root of the Tree of Interpretation.

The end result is amazing: the hidden truth concerning the Book of Revelation becomes apparent; the mystery is resolved and all confusion is dissipated. Hallelujah! **Okay, enough of this symbolism, let's** proceed with the Doctrinalist Viewpoint and get to The Revelation of Revelation.