



Influences on Interpretation

1 Corinthians 1:10 -- *Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

Introduction

1. In the above passage we see that one of the concerns of God about the Corinthians was their lack of agreement on what was the truth. Understanding that God wants us to be of the same mind, many faiths have decided to agree to leave their differences behind and work together. But agreeing to disagree is not what the Lord was looking for.
2. Paul is a little clearer on the subject when he writes to the Ephesians. In Ephesians 4:3ff he specified that the unity was to be "of the Spirit" and that there was only "one faith."
3. Besides ignorance of the Scriptures, there are many other reasons why men seem to have trouble interpreting the Bible correctly and thus are unable to be of the "same mind and same judgment." Here are a few influences that interfere with proper interpretation.

A. The Influence of Satan:

Matthew 13:19 -- *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom the seed was sown beside the road.*

1. Often we forget that the Devil is active in this world and those youngest to the word are his prime target, that they must be protected and helped to grow, and that they must be supplied with the full armor of God. Pleasures and ease distract.
2. For those with no knowledge of the truth, the world is filled with lies that must be corrected. The devil seems to hold a school of his own and it is surprising how easily wrong ideas get a hold in a world with no clue as to what is right. Examples:
 - "Religion is the opium of the masses." (Not according to Psychology)
 - "God is dead!" (Actually, it is most people who are)
 - "It really doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere."
 - "The Bible has become corrupted." (See 1 Peter 1:24-25)
 - "Science has proved evolution to be correct." (Not by Statisticians)

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 -- *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel...*

B. The Influence of an Inattentive Mind:

Luke 8:18 -- *Therefore take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.*

1. The attentiveness we give to something will always effect how well we hear or understand it. It is hard to study and watch TV at the same time. The Thessalonians were praised because of the respect they paid to the gospel, holding it precious as the word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). The Bereans likewise were more "noble-minded" in that they searched the Scriptures daily to see if the things were so (Acts 17:11).
2. We can be distracted by cares and deluded by God. Misunderstanding can come when we do not take the time to know enough. The world becomes more important and so we schedule God and church out of daily life. Sound bites and bumper stickers do not make for good religious philosophy.

Matthew 13:22 -- *And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*

2 Thessalonians 2:11 -- *And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false.*

3. How attentive were you to Luke 8:18. Did you catch the paradox? How can what a person does not have be taken away? It is for the reason of engaging the mind the Lord uses such interesting language as paradoxes.

Matthew 13:13,15 -- "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand... for the heart of this people has become dull..."

C. The Influence of Sloppy Handling:

2 Timothy 2:15 -- Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of the truth.

1. To not follow proper scientific laws of interpretation, to ignore contextual considerations and the rules of grammar, and the many other guidelines for which understanding any written work is a must, is guaranteed to give you a false impression and understanding of the truth.
2. For lack of these, some have concluded that the Bible cannot be understood at all. But God commands us otherwise.

Ephesians 5:17 -- So then do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.

3. We can also get in a hurry and not take the time to study and mediate for our Bible Classes and thus come ill prepared to understand and participate. And then the class must suffer through our ramblings and guesses.
4. It is also easy to let the mind wander and not focus on what is being said by the preacher, the teacher or fellow students.

D. The Influence of Preconceived Notions:

Ezra 7:10 -- For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.

1. When Ezra wanted to understand the word of God he prepared his heart. That means emptying it of any preconceived ideas and listening to what God has to say.
2. Each time one opens up a passage he must forget what he has learned previously so that man's doctrine does not cloud his understanding of the truth.
3. Too often people approach Bible Study with filters and baggage. This could be something they want the Scripture to say because of their own desires and twitching ears.
4. They may have previous wrong learning from other faiths, friends or family. They may also have a limited or bad education. Some have referred to Bible Seminaries rather as Theological Cemeteries.

Matthew 15:9 -- But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrine the precepts of men.

E. The Lack of Application to Test Understanding:

1. Once we figure out a design we must still build and fly it to test it. In Engineering, a prototype must be construction and run through the "proving ground."
2. Much would be brought to light if faith healers actually followed up on those they supposedly healed.
3. Miracle workers should test themselves to see if they are in the faith. Can they survive the poisons and snakes bites (Mark 16:16-18). Jesus and the apostles did not need to build a stage or rely on the faith of others (Acts 5:12-16), nor did they have to build hospitals for the sick. If you can speak in a tongue, find out which one (Acts 2:4-6). Even if you think you are just speaking to angels, someone should be speaking to the group for the common good. How do those with the gift of interpretation compare?
4. As Ezra also practiced and taught, so we need to apply the tests...

Romans 12:1-2 -- ...present your bodies as living and holy sacrifice... that you may prove what the will of God is...

James 1:22 -- But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.