

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: (ORGANIZED BIBLE KNOWLEDGE)

## Part I: Bibliology (Knowledge of the Doctrine of Scripture)

### E. Biblical Interpretation (Knowing For SURE God's Truth From Scripture)

#### I. Introduction

- A. A challenge today's Christian faces in light of the many ideas about what **is** God's Bible truth -- let alone the methods of interpreting the Bible itself -- is his ever being sure just what **is** God's revealed Bible truth!
- B. Scripture clearly addresses and answers this challenge as follows:

#### II. Biblical Interpretation (Knowing For SURE God's Truth From Scripture)

- A. The Bible warns us to **avoid** certain *errant ways* of **obtaining** what men **think** is God's truth as follows:
  1. God warns us against heeding even **miraculous experiences** above **written Scripture**, Deut. 13:1-4.
  2. Then, in using Scripture, God warns us against getting into word-battles, etc. that lead to sin, but to use Scripture "rightly" to foster love, pure motives and a true faith, 2 Tim. 2:14-16; 1 Tim. 1:3-5; 6:4.
- B. So, to be **sure** we use Scripture **rightly**, we adopt God's right method of interpreting the Bible as follows:
  1. Mark 12:18-27 shows Jesus used the normal, or litero-grammatico-historical way to interpret Scripture:
    - a. The Sadducees tried to get Jesus to counter belief in the resurrection as they thought the soul ceased existing at death. If the soul ceased at death, they felt there was nothing left to resurrect, so there could not then be a resurrection, Z.P.E.B., v. Five, p. 214.
    - b. Christ's response uses an interpretation of Exodus 3:6 to prove the existence of the soul after death.
    - c. That interpretation exposed His method of interpreting Scripture, His hermeneutic, as follows: (a) Jesus' argument rests on the present tense of an elliptical verb, one that is not written but is grammatically necessary in the translation as "*am*," Mk. 12:26. His point was that God still remained the God of the forefathers though they were deceased at the time of Exodus 3:6; thus, though dead, these men still existed! This argument requires we use Exodus 3:6 **literally**. (b) His argument also rests on supplying an elliptical verb in accord with the rules of Hebrew grammar, interpreting Scripture **grammatically**. (c) His argument also uses the **historical** context where the patriarchs had long since died though God still was their God! He thus used the **historical** method. (d) Jesus then used the litero-grammatico-historical, or **NORMAL** method of interpreting Scripture.
  2. Matthew 5:18 shows Christ used this interpretation route for **all** of Scripture, for He referred to all the letters ("jot" = smallest Hebrew letter *yodh*) and parts of letters (title) that distinguish them from other letters that would change their words' contextual meanings in all of Scripture as being authoritative.
  3. In summary, Jesus revealed the right way to **interpret all** of Scripture is to use the **NORMAL** method.
- C. Then, Scripture reveals how we can be **sure** we have the **right** interpretation once we have **made** one:
  1. Christ promised the indwelling Holy Spirit would teach believers God's truth, John 14:26; 16:13.
  2. As Scripture is God's revelation, the Spirit also illuminates Scripture truth to believers, 1 Cor. 2:6-15.
  3. Well, the believer can **discern** if he is controlled and hence guided and taught by the Spirit as follows:
    - a. In 1 Cor. 3:3, Paul's rhetorical question expects an affirmative answer, an appraisal (by way of the negative adv., *ouchi*). Since the question is aimed at **carnal** believers, it implies they could tell they were carnal as they were jealous and had strife. Thus, even **carnal** believers can discern their carnal state by assessing behavior. (UBS Grk. N.T., p. 583f; Arndt & Gingrich, Grk.-En. Lex., p. 602-603)
    - b. Other behaviors revealing control by the sin nature or by the Spirit are revealed in Gal. 5:16-23.
    - c. If one thus sees he is controlled by the Holy Spirit, and has used the method of interpreting the Bible given above to interpret, and obtains the Spirit's fruit of peace regarding that interpretation, he has assurance via Ps. 23:3 (also 2 Tim. 3:14) that the Lord has led him to the right interpretation.

**Lesson:** (1) To gain the right interpretation, we must (a) believe on Christ to receive the Holy Spirit, Jn. 7:38-39; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13. (b) Then, we must fellowship with God to heed the Spirit's teaching of Scripture, 1 Cor. 2:6-15. (c) We must rest upon **written** Scripture above all experience as our basis of insight, and use (d) only the normal method of interpretation (described above). (2) To be sure we have the right interpretation, we (a) FIRST check to see if we used the normal (littero-grammatico-historical) method JESUS used. (b) IF so, we THEN see if the Holy Spirit supplies us peace via Gal. 5:19-23. Ps. 23:3b assures us we have the right interpretation when we have gone this far & everything checks out!