**Principles of Interpretation: Things to Be Aware Of**

**Introduction:**

Whenever we begin to open the Word of God to come to an understanding of it, let us be like Ezra of old. “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.”NKJV Ezra 7:10.

**Theme:** To examine “significant distinctions” in the Bible and how they help us come to a proper understanding of it.

**Body:**

1. **The Permanent and the Temporary**

Many instances in the New Testament mention the performance of various miracles: healing the blind and crippled, raising the dead, speaking in various languages unknown to the speaker . . . Modern-day “Pentecostalism” believes these miraculous gifts are permanent. Those today can possess them just as in the 1st Century. But were they meant to be permanent or just temporary? Read I Corinthians 13:8-12. “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child. I understood as a child. I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” NKJV Miraculous gifts of prophecies, tongues, and knowledge would cease when “that which is perfect is come.” Why were those special powers needed? Their knowledge of God’s Word, was “in part” – partial or incomplete. God’s total revelation had not been written down yet. These gifts were needed while the church was in infancy [as a child]. This is similar to a new building being constructed. Scaffolding is needed to help build. But when the building is completed, there is no more need for scaffolding. So when God’s written revelation was complete, there was no more need for miraculous gifts. Their purpose was fulfilled. *It is so very important when studying the Bible to understand the difference between temporary and permanent*.

1. **Circumstance and Condition**

We might also call these incidental and essential. As brother Deaver notes: “Circumstances vary; conditions do not.”

1. Lord’s Supper Circumstances varied as to where it was taken as well as what time of day on Sunday. Mere circumstances. But the emblems never varied. They always were bread and fruit of the vine. These were symbols of Christ’s body and blood; they had spiritual significance.
2. Evangelism A brief glance at Paul’s missionary journeys reveal that he travelled using various methods: by foot, by ship . . . It was incidental how he carried out the Great Commission; the essential thing was preaching the gospel [same gospel].
3. Baptism Many claim that the form of baptism is merely incidental [sprinkling, pouring, immersion]. But the Bible declares why it must be immersion. It represents a burial and a resurrection. (Romans 6:4) “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raise from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” NKJV The other forms do not convey the idea of a burial and a resurrection. *So we see how important it is to make distinction between the incidental and the essential*.
4. **Distinguish between Custom and Principle in the New Testament**

The New Testament is an historical document, written in the 1st Century, in a society very different from ours. It is very necessary for us today to be able to distinguish between what is merely a custom of the 1st Century culture and what is a binding principle that we are obliged to obey. Let’s look at a few examples.

1. I Corinthians 11:2-16 “Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, not woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God. Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering. But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God. Women wearing a veil Should Christian women wear a veil everywhere they go? I don’t believe so. The wearing of a veil in the 1st Century Corinthian society was an indication of a godly woman. The impure and ungodly women [especially prostitutes] appeared in public without a head covering. So Paul was telling these Christian women to wear a veil so they would never be placed in the group of impure women. This custom does not prevail in America; therefore, Christian women are not obligated to wear a veil. There is a principle taught here though. We should never dress in such a way as to be identified with immoral people! Think about that!
2. I Timothy 2:11-15 “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.” NKJV Many today even in the Lord’s church are saying this is strictly cultural and has no bearing on us today. Not so! Why? The text says quite plainly why a woman’s teaching sphere is limited. Notice he never mentions anything about the 1st Century culture.
3. Order of creation
4. Man and woman’s roles in the fall. Reasons go all the way back to the creation. Not cultural at all!

Bobby Stafford September 16, 2018