

Hazards to Avoid

Here are six pitfalls of Interpretation to watch for as you study the Scriptures.

MISREADING THE TEXT

You'll never gain a proper understanding of Scripture if you don't or can't read the text properly. Ignorance of what the text says is the unpardonable sin of Interpretation. It shows you really haven't done your homework. You've skipped the first step in the Bible study method - Observation.

DISTORTING THE TEXT

It's one thing to struggle with difficulties in Interpretation; it's another thing to distort the meaning of God's Word. That's serious. That's something He will bring to judgment. So we need to be careful to learn how to interpret Scripture accurately, practically, and profitably.

CONTRADICTING THE TEXT

Contradicting the text is even worse than textual distortion. It amounts to calling God a liar. Satan has been lying from the beginning of history, and he's still lying today by encouraging people to contradict the Biblical text. One of his favorite strategies is to use the words of God to authorize a belief or practice that goes against the character of God.

SUBJECTIVISM

Many Christians tolerate a form of mysticism in reading their Bibles that they would allow in no other realm. They violate every tenet of reason and common sense. Their Bible study is totally subjective. They wander around the Scriptures, waiting for a "liver-quiver" to tell them when they've struck pay dirt. There's nothing wrong with having an emotional reaction to the Word of God. But the meaning of the text is in the text, not in our subjective response to the text.

RELATIVISM

Some people approach Scripture assuming that the bible changes meaning over time. They believe the text meant one thing when it was written but something else today; its meaning is relative. A passage can have numerous applications. But it can only have one proper interpretation, one

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meaning - ultimately the meaning it had to the original writer. We must reconstruct his message if we want an accurate understanding.

OVERCONFIDENCE

In Bible study, as in life, pride goes before a fall. The minute you think that you've mastered a portion of Scripture, you are setting yourself up for a tumble. Some of the worst abuses of doctrine occur when someone sets himself up as the ultimate authority on the text. Keep in mind that Interpretation never ends. You can never come to the end of your study and say, "Well, I've got that one. I know that passage."