

CHAPTER D5

A LITERAL INTERPRETATION: MAKING MUCH OF THE WORD OF GOD

You have seen in the first four doctrinal chapters that I interpret the Bible literally. Does God want us to take Him literally? Most people do not really believe the Bible and therefore do not take it literally. Is the majority correct? Let's examine how the Lord Jesus Christ interpreted the word of God.

The Sadducees believed there was no life after death and believed there was no spirit realm (**Ac 23:8**). Christ answered them in **Mt 22:32** by quoting **Ex 3:6** as if the Scripture not only accurately recorded the words God used, but was even accurate down to the *tense* of the words, such as "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Christ commented on that quote by saying, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living", He was making the point that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were *still alive* when God said that to Moses! What was Christ's proof that they were still alive? It was the fact that the black and white print on the page in the Bible says God used the present tense *am* rather than the past tense *was*. Christ also pointed out that God wasn't just speaking to the people back in Moses' day, He was also speaking to the Sadducees two thousand years later (**Mt 22:31**). Thus we learn several things: Christ's words were also spoken to *us* even though we live two thousand years after He spoke them; we learn to take the Bible literally; and we learn to *apply* the Bible today by basing our lives and doctrines on *what it says*. The majority of Christians back then were astonished that Christ could base modern doctrine on a literal interpretation of something written two thousand years before (**Mt 22:33**), just like most Christians today are astonished (and condescendingly disdainful) when Bible believers make much of the words of God.

The above paragraph underscores the importance of applying the literal present tense of the words *are* and *is* in **2 Ti 3:15,16**. They are wonderful and amazing verses – and they mean *exactly* what they say; you may safely build doctrine upon their literal meaning. The words were penned two thousand years ago, and they are said directly to you today.

The Jews knew the Messiah, the Christ, would be the son of David (**Jn 12:13; 4:42; Mt 21:9,15; 22:42**). But they did not think He would be anything more than a mere man – like the prophets were men. So they violently objected when Jesus made Himself more than a man (**Jn 5:18; 8:56-59; 10:33**). Christ pointed out (**Mt 22:41-46; Lk 20:41-44**) that a man's father is always his lord and not the other way around. Christ then reasoned together with the Scriptures in **Ps 110:1** by showing that David called his son "Lord." That meant the son of David had to be more than a mere man in order to be exalted above his human father, a father who was also a king ordained by God. The Pharisees were embarrassed because even though they knew what the Bible *said*, they hadn't put it together and applied it to their doctrine. (Christians today, who haven't even *read* the Bible much less put it all together and apply it via serious Bible study, make the Pharisees look good: **Mt 5:20**.)

While you're in the Psalms, look at **Ps 110:4**. Now turn to **He 7** and let's look at how the New Testament teaches us to interpret the Bible (such as Ps 110:4) literally and to apply that to doctrine. He 7 has a discussion about the old Aaronic/Levitical priesthood being replaced by another priest after the order of Melchisedec in accordance with Ps 110:4. And then He 7:15-17 says this new priest would not be made after a carnal (mortal) commandment, but after the power of an endless (immortal) life. Was that a new doctrine? No, answers v.17, that doctrine is not new; it is based on a very literal interpretation of Ps 110:4's use of "for ever." Therefore, because mortal men are not "for ever" they are not qualified for the Melchisedecian priesthood. The doctrine in He 7:15 and 16 is built upon a literal interpretation of Ps 110:4 – which perfectly complements Christ's doctrine based on a literal interpretation of Ps 110:1. From this we see that Jesus Christ is our immortal Melchisedecian high priest (**He 7:24-26; 9:11; 3:1**). This also shows that Levites, Mormon elders, and other mortals are not qualified for the Melchisedecian priesthood because they die (He 7:8,16,23-25,28).

These examples illustrate the necessity of a literal interpretation in order to fully appreciate and understand Bible doctrine. When people point to the parables in the Bible in an attempt to discredit literal interpretations, their blindness causes them to miss the fact that they are actually providing more evidence to support a literal interpretation of the Bible – *because the Bible literally says the parables are parables!*

Taking the Bible literally is also a good way for ignorant wretches to avoid being offensive to the Lord. Because we have grown up in an Enlightened culture in which equality supposedly makes the different strata of society level it is sometimes difficult for us to understand how important it is for people to know their place in society – and stay there. When an ignorant buffoon of a servant has been hired to serve food and drink at a conference of wealthy, cultured, educated, dignified, intelligent, and powerful international aristocrats, the worst thing he can do is open his mouth and say something other than Yes, sir; No, sir; Right away, sir; etc. For him to say and do anything outside of his duties is to risk offending the dignitaries in many, many ways that he is unaware of and simply cannot understand. He needs to be trained to serve with fear and respect, and he must understand one of the drawbacks of being an aristocrat is that you must occasionally suffer the presence of your servants. That is bad enough, and is why you do not see aristocrats on various modes of public transportation, in movie theaters, etc. (My wife and I know an excellent chef who as a young man was serving dignitaries at a White House dinner. He said something he thought was OK and appropriate to one of the aristocrats. He was immediately demoted and transferred to Camp David.) As God's slaves we must study and strive to serve Him as efficiently and as unobtrusively as possible in the hope that we'll be found pleasing in His sight. Two necessary components of discernment are fear and humility, and they will help us avoid the haughty and offensive arrogance of not taking His commandments literally by deciding to guess at what He really *meant* to say. I say again, we sinners are simply too young and too stupid to rise up and change His Instructions into what we think is right and good. God is great; we are not. We are the servant class and God has given us His Book of Instructions. If we do not obey it literally we run the risk of having Him say, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (**Lk 6:46**); "Thou art an offence unto me" (**Mt 16:23**); "How long shall I suffer you?" (**Mt 17:17**). We need to climb down from our prideful arrogance and get about the business of being humble servants who live to carry out our Master's every word.

John provides another example of how carefully we must pay attention to the Lord's exact words. The Lord made a statement in **Jn 21:22**, then verse **23** says many of the brethren mistakenly went around saying what they thought the Lord *meant* – that the disciple should not die. How easy it is for us to take a cryptic, vague, or confusing verse from the Bible and quickly assign a simple, straightforward, easily-understood meaning. But John in v.23 points out that Jesus never used the

word *die*, and John then quotes exactly – without explanation – the words Jesus used. After correcting what the disciples thought Christ *meant* by making a big deal about literal exactness, you'd think John would explain Christ's rather cryptic statement. But he doesn't. He stops with the take-the-Bible-literally correction. In so doing, I believe he is making an additional point: **It's more important that we pay attention to the exact wording in the Bible than it is for us to understand every verse.** The Lord knows there are a few confusing verses in His Book; He made them that way for a reason, and He'll make their meanings evident when it is time. In the meantime, we must faithfully live in accordance with all the myriad easily-understood verses. Yes, I know you'd also like to perfectly understand the few cryptic verses in the Bible, but if the Lord's will is that some verses are harder to know, what is that to thee? Follow thou the Lord in those things you already understand, and faithfully ponder in your heart those other things while patiently waiting for the Lord to reveal their meaning. John teaches us not to put words in the Lord's mouth; submissive obedience is more important than complete knowledge. As humble servants who want to please God by doing *exactly* what He *says*, we must be careful not to get ahead of Him. Wait, I say, on the Lord.

In these first five doctrinal chapters I have deliberately covered subject matter that is neutral and non-threatening to introduce you to several things: First, you have to know the Bible. Second, a literal interpretation of the Bible and using Scripture to interpret Scripture reveal truths that do not contradict anything in the Bible because those truths *came from the Bible*. The Bible is its own proof that it is the word of God. Third, if your church doesn't believe the Bible is the inspired word of God and therefore doesn't take it literally, the blind are attempting to lead you astray. (The most common method used today by apostate preachers to teach you not to believe the Bible and not to take it literally is to select one of the many definitions found in Hebrew and Greek dictionaries to change what the Bible literally says.)

If these first five doctrinal chapters have interested you, I am praying that you will patiently study the Scripture that is referenced in all of the chapters in this doctrinal section in order to see not if they are "different", but if they are Christ-like literal interpretations and applications of the words God has given us *today*. Quietly take note when people say about this book, "Boy, is that ever a narrow-minded fundamentalist view!" that they did not say, "Boy, the word of God doesn't say those things!" My point is you must learn what God says literally first. Until you know that, it is very dangerous to go around interpreting the Bible figuratively.

The amazing truths revealed by believing the Bible should astound you and give you a glimpse at how far removed from God His church has strayed. The amazing consistency of the doctrines (like the way Mt 22 and He 7 show how complementary Ps 110:1 and Ps 110:4 are) will help you see the mind of God behind the Bible. And all of it will help you see how necessary the words of God are, how necessary it is to believe and apply those words, and how much of a joke the modern lip service of apostate Christianity has made the word of God.

For those of you who may have skipped the historical section and may not own King James Bibles: It may have been difficult for you to follow along with these first five doctrinal chapters because your modern Bible versions say things that are different from the inspired Scriptures. It is only going to get worse for you from here on. It will become increasingly frustrating for you to make sense of my Scriptural references because your version says something different. That frustration will then cause you to stop looking up the verses because you will decide I don't know what I'm talking about. At that point some of you will drop this book into the trash. Others of you will quickly skim through some of the rest of the book just to see how different it is from the doctrines your church taught you. Therefore, if you do not have a King James Bible and/or you do not have a clear and firm grasp of the Bible version issue, I suggest you skip ahead now to chapter D22, *The King James Bible*, and study it carefully. (A free download of the KJV is available at TheSwordbearer.org.)

Those of you who have the Authorized 1611 King James Bible and do understand the Bible version issue should study the following chapters in order. There's nothing wrong with skipping ahead to chapters that interest you, but you'll get more out of this book your first time through if you study the chapters in order: As the chapters progress I rely on your knowing the material in the earlier chapters. That means as helpful as it was to skip ahead to the chapters I recommended, you should read them again as you get to them.

In the historical section you saw examples of Old Testament and New Testament saints, including some big names, who made mistakes because they used Reason instead of Biblical discernment. How is it that we are able to so easily spot errors when they could not? For three reasons: First, we have the advantage of hindsight; it is easy on Monday to point out the mistakes of Sunday's quarterbacks because we were not involved in and distracted by all the bruises of the games. Second, it is easier to see wrong in others than in ourselves because we tend to take things personally and get defensive. Third, when *we* think we are right it seems so much more valid than when someone else thinks he is right. Therefore it is possible to read the historical section, be shocked at how blind and carnal those *other* Christians were, and congratulate ourselves that we don't have their problem. But we are no different from them, and this doctrinal section is going to help you see that. But it will never be able to help you see anything if you don't first get rid of all the things modern Christianity has allowed – indeed, *encouraged* – you to carry through life: Reason, opinions, sincere feelings, Greek/Hebrew dictionaries, commentaries, traditional Christian "heritage", traditional doctrines, snappy little comebacks, and sophistry.

As you go through this section keep an eye on yourself to see how you react. If you read something and reject it because you "know" it is wrong, you are carnal and live by Reason. Unless you repent you will go to hell. And if you go looking for some Greek or Hebrew word definition to support your doctrine, or if you allow your traditional doctrine to tell you what the passage "really" means, you are carnal and bound by tradition. Unless you repent you will go to hell because you are your own authority. But if you find a doctrine that is shocking, offensive, and contrary to what you "know", and you react by searching the Scriptures to see if these things be so, accept the meaning of the words printed in the Bible, and refrain from running to Hebrew/Greek dictionaries (and Bible study/commentaries like this one), and go to the Lord about it and ask Him to help you become His Bible-believing obedient servant, then your new man is alive and well and has a good chance of gaining the ascendancy over your old man.

So, the easy reading is over and it is time to get into that which we as Christ's servants who want to someday rule and reign under Him need to be proficient at – doctrine.