

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

I recently read the following comments in *The Patriot Post* Digest dated July 7, 2006: “Judge not, lest ye be judged.” It’s notable that this text from the Bible has replaced John 3:16 as Americans’ favorite scriptural quotation – but what does it actually mean? Is this ageless admonition really a call to unmitigated tolerance over discernment between right and wrong? Is it really a biblical nod of head to the virtues of postmodern morality and multicultural society?

Of course not. As Christ’s imperative against judgment appears in the Gospel accounts, a different picture *emerges*. With the Pharisees clearly in view, in the Sermon on the Mount account of Matthew 7, and again in Luke 6, “judge not” appears in the context of the proverbial man who perceives the *speck* that is in his brother’s eye, but not the log that is in his own. The context, then, suggests a warning against hypocrisy, not moral discernment. Indeed, the full imperative of the passage encourages righteous judgment: “first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”

Then, in John 7:24, taking aim at the Pharisees once again, Jesus makes another extraordinary statement: “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” So, does Jesus really call his followers to judge not? Not really. In the vocabulary of theologians, this practice of isolating and thereby misinterpreting a phrase or passage from its context is called *isogesis*

Other common examples of isogesis - which we’ll leave to your own exegesis – include the imperative “care for orphans and widows” (James 1) to sanction a social and thereby governmental responsibility. “Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Corinthians 1:1) as an affirmation of male chauvinism; and “Love keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13) as a get-out-of-jail-free card for habitual sin.

The title of the article in which these comments - appeared was “Constitutional isogesis...” The point of the article was that “The same fallacies that affect biblical interpretation also affect our interpretation of the Constitution.” The conclusion of the article was as follows:

Just as the problem of biblical and constitutional isogesis is essentially the same, so too is the solution. For centuries, a fundamental guiding principle has directed proper scriptural exegesis: Scripture interprets Scripture. That is to say, the primary lens for understanding a text is the text elsewhere in the Bible -- thus, we interpret the Bible through what the Bible says.

The author of the article is a conservative. He would also claim to be a Christian although the Bible would judge him to be a non-Christian. Yet even non-Christian conservatives know and recognize the improper practice of isogesis (isolating a phrase or passage from its context) and that it results in misinterpretation. They also know and recognize the proper practice of exegesis (that Scripture interprets Scripture) and that the primary lens for understanding a text is the text itself. Especially is this true with the text: “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Mat. 7:1). There is a judgment that is condemned and there is a judgment that is commanded. The judgment that is condemned is hypocritical judgment (Mat. 7:3). The judgment commanded is righteous judgment (John 7:24). May we all learn and apply these truths to our lives in every realm, including both the religious and the political.

David B. Watson
Sapulpa, OK

BELVEDERE BEACON

“Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)

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(Greater Augusta, GA area)

A WEEK OF GOOD THOUGHTS

Suppose we start this very day
To live our lives in a different way;
Supposed we vowed and constantly tried
To help those in trouble on life’s wayside;
If we showed by our deeds a hint of His love
Wouldn’t earth be a bit more like heaven above?

ON MONDAY: Look for a smile today and return it with one of your own. Give someone faith and hope, it’s such a beautiful loan.

ON TUESDAY: Gather a thought that’s kind, one that’s sincere and deep. Be sure to pass it along for such are too precious to keep.

ON WEDNESDAY: forget yesterday’s sorrow, mistakes, sadness and pain. Lift your heart with hope as flowers to sun and rain.

ON THURSDAY: Offer a word of comfort and prayer to help someone in need. A little thoughtful gift, some flowers, or a smile makes us all rich indeed.

ON FRIDAY: You shall not pass this way again, so do any good you can do. Don’t put it off till tomorrow or the chance may be lost for you.

ON SATURDAY: Today will soon be a memory so don’t let it come to an end, without a smile, without a song, or just a word from a friend.

ON SUNDAY: Don’t let worry and care depress you, or brush your joy away. But arise and give thanks to God above, for His love and another “Blest Day.”

“...let each esteem other better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others”

(Philippians 2:3-4).

Author Unknown

Let this be our goal for 2007

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.
Morning Worship 11.00 am.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

EVANGELIST: Ken Chumbley - Tel. No. (803) -279-8663

www.belvederechurchofchrist.org E-mail church@belvederechurchofchrist.org

PREDICTIONS

This past Tuesday the the “700 Club” broadcast on the Christian Broadcasting Network stated, in what has become an annual tradition of predictions, Pat Robertson told his viewers that God had told him that there would be a terrorist attack on the United States that would result in “mass killing” late in 2007. He continued stating, “I’m not necessarily saying it’s going to be nuclear” and “The Lord didn’t say nuclear. But I do believe that it will be something like that. Earlier, during a recent “prayer retreat,” he further said that God told him that major cities and possibly millions of people would be affected by the terrorist attack which should take place sometime after September. He further stated that God also told him that the United States only feigns friendship with Israel and that U.S. policies are pushing Israel toward “national suicide.”

Some of Robertson’s previous “predictions” include that which he made in May of 2006 in which he said that God had told him that storms and possibly a tsunami were to crash into America’s coastline in 2006. As we now know, the 2006 Hurricane season was one of the least active in a number of years, especially as it related to hurricanes striking the coast. In 2004, Robertson predicted that President Bush would easily win reelection. As we now know, Bush beat Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts but one could hardly say he “easily” won. In 2005, he predicted that Bush would have victory after victory in his second term. As we all now know, such has not happened and was clearly shown by the fall elections of 2006 and now the Democrats are now in control of both houses of Congress thus making it more difficult for Bush to have “victory after victory” in the last two years of his Presidency.

When commenting concerning his predictions, he stated, “I have a relatively good track record” and “Sometimes I miss.” With respect to the predictions concerning storms and a tsunami that he made last year, he cited last spring’s heavy rains and flooding in New England as partly fulfilling his prediction.

It is important to note that Robertson claims that God told him these predictions. If that were true, we would ask these questions. Would he only have “a relatively good track record? Would he miss sometimes? Would the predictions only be partially fulfilled? When one studies the Bible concerning those who give predictions, prophecies, that God has revealed to them, the answer to these questions is a resounding “No.” Note what is revealed in Scripture as Moses prophecies, “*I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him*” (Deuteronomy 18:18-22). Both Peter (Acts 3:22) and Stephen (Acts 7:37) make it clear that God was revealing to Moses the coming of the Christ. However, note again the last verse, “*When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him*” (Deuteronomy 18:22).

Mr. Robertson would be better advised to study the Scriptures than giving “predictions” that only give him a “relatively good track record” or that result in him having to say, “Sometimes I miss.” or that they are only “partly fulfilled.” Those who would believe Robertson, given his track record, are clearly being deceived and following a false teacher. Don’t be misled by such fallacious “prophecies” or “predictions.”

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Let us continue to keep in our prayers Helen Culpepper, Dot McLemore, Pam Gossett and her mother, Kathy Treadway’s mother, Lanny Niver’s father.

Helen Culpepper had been doing better but on Sunday had problems with vertigo that prevented her from being out.

Some were gone this past Sunday but we were blessed to have a number of visitors particularly some of Susan Arnold’s family from Tennessee.

The Arnold family , Kimberly and Jennifer Wilson were not able to be out Wednesday as they were not well.

A sign-up sheet for the cleaning of the church building for 2007 is posted on the bulletin board. Please sign up to assist in this work.

A \$2,800 BIBLE!?!

The shaky conditions of his economy led the *Roman* Emperor Diocletian to declare an all-out price-fixing in history's first attempt to curtail inflation. The edict, proclaimed in A.D. 300, set the price of beer, soap, food and even the Bible. To afford a complete Bible at the emperor's price, the average American would probably have to mortgage his house. Under the edict, you were charged for a Bible on this basis: A scribe's work was price-fixed at \$2.80 per 100 *stychoi* (one *stychos* equals one line of *Homeric* 16 syllable verse). For carefully copying 18,302 *stychoi* – the complete New Testament-he would receive the fixed figure of \$512.45 (in today's currency) and not a drachma more or less. For copying the complete Bible he would receive \$2,800. You paid, in addition, the cost of the papyri (a type of paper), which was in short production and price-fixed under the luxuries category. Just think, for \$3.00 you can now buy a Bible with full-color maps-at a savings of \$2,797.00! How many Bibles would you have at \$2,800.00 each? How much would you read the Bible if you paid \$2,800.00 for it? It's the same Book either way.

*“How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O
God! How great is the sum of them”
(Psalm 139:17)*

THE ONE BOOK THAT CAN NEVER BE DESTROYED

“Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89).

- Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35).
- “he grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever” (Isa. 40:8).
- The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12-13), cutting deep into the human heart.
- The word of God will be present at The Great Judgment. "He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jhn. 12:48).