

STUDY PACK 4

HISTORICAL SCHOOLS OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION

"A loose hermeneutic can destroy the meaning of inspiration altogether and may be a cloak for a denial of biblical teachings. An orthodox stand on Scripture profits not at all if the truth of Scripture is short-circuited by perverse interpretation (e.g. Jehovah's Witness)."

~~ Clark Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation*, p. 208 ~~

I. JEWISH LITERALISM

- A. Prominent Jewish teachers like Philo and the Pharisees taught that the Scripture was _____.
- B. The Pharisees taught _____ emphasizing four main rules:
1. The principle of context.
 2. Comparing Scripture with Scripture.
 3. Using clear passages to help understand the less clear.
 4. There were no wasted words in Scripture.
- C. Unfortunately, _____ developed ways around _____ that they defended, Mark 7:10-13.
- D. They made the eternally tragic mistake of applying the passages _____.

II. JEWISH ALLEGORISM

- A. The allegorists believed that the real meaning of Scripture lay _____ the literal meaning.
- B. The Jews adopted this idea from _____.
- C. This approach makes _____ the final authority.
- D. This approach was popular with _____.
- E. The Kabbala turned mysticism into the occult.

III. JEWISH MYSTICISM

- A. Various Jewish Rabbis developed mystical approaches to the Bible.
- B. One approach was _____ which sees a mystical relationship

between words and concepts which have the same numerical value. For instance, the name "Eliezer" has the value of 318 in the Hebrew. Since Abraham also had 318 servants, the rabbis interpreted this to mean that Eliezer was equal to all the rest of Abraham's servants. Or, there must be 903 ways of dying, because the Hebrew word death has the numerical value of 903.

- C. There are several other forms of Jewish mysticism which find hidden meanings in various combinations of letters.

IV. CHRISTIAN LITERALISM

- A. Many early Christian writers clearly practiced literal interpretation.
- B. The literal interpretation of the Bible was defended by the School of Antioch (founded by Lucian around 300 A.D.). Famous teachers like Theodore of Mopsuestia, Chrysostom and Theodore wrote and preached at great length defending the literal interpretation of Scripture. Chrysostom writes:

"We are not lords over the rules of interpretation, but must pursue _____ and in that way make use of the allegorical method ... This is everywhere a rule in Scripture: when it wants to allegorize, _____, so that the passage will not be interpreted superficially or be met by the undisciplined desire of those who enjoy allegorization to wander about and be carried in every direction."

V. CHRISTIAN ALLEGORISM

- A. The School at Alexandria.
 - 1. Pantaeus (around 180 A.D.) turned a pagan school in Alexandria into a "Christian" school. He tried to combine paganism, Judaism, and Christianity. He approached the Bible in a completely allegorical fashion.
 - 2. He was succeeded by Clement of Alexandria. Clement organized and popularized a "Christian" allegorical approach to the Scriptures.
 - 3. Clement was followed by Origen.

"Among the church fathers who allegorized the Scripture, Origen (A.D. 185-254) probably deserves the title "Mr. Allegorism." Origen so popularized the allegorical method that, in the eyes of the church historians, he has become _____. Origen followed the path of Philo, the Jew and assumed that the Old and New Testaments contain deep and hidden senses.

Origen said that like man who consists of body, soul, and spirit, the Scripture has a simultaneous threefold sense - the literal, the moral, and

the spiritual. Nevertheless, in practice, he seldom referred to the moral sense, and scarcely at all to the literal.

Origen also taught that the Old and the New Testaments contain not only absurd and unreasonable portions, but also fables which did not actually take place. Once Origen asked impatiently, 'Of what use ... is it to me who have come to hear what the Holy Spirit teaches the human race, to be told that Abraham stood under the oak of Mamre?'"

Many of the reformers felt that Origen did more damage to the Bible _____
_____. They felt that he _____,
poisoned _____ for many, and
_____.

B. Dualism.

Augustine popularized the idea that you should take the non-prophetic Scriptures literally, but that you should allegorize the prophetic Scriptures. This opened the door for the teaching of amillennialism. Augustine is remembered as _____
_____.

VI. ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERPRETATION

Roman Catholicism taught that proper Bible interpretation could only be done by the leadership of the Catholic Church. For them, the Bible said whatever the church said that it said.

VII. THE REFORMERS AND LITERAL INTERPRETATION

A. The Reformation began with an emphasis on _____.
This is seen in these famous quotes from Martin Luther:

"The literal sense of Scripture alone is the whole essence of faith and of Christian theology. ~ ~ Martin Luther ~ ~

"I ask for Scriptures and Eck offers me the Fathers. I ask for the sun and he shows me his lanterns. I ask, 'Where is your Scripture proof and he adduces Ambrose and Cyril ... With all due respect to the Fathers, I prefer the authority of the Scripture." ~ ~ Martin Luther ~ ~

B. As the Reformers came under more and more pressure to justify their state church systems, many of them began to abandon literal interpretation.