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Marc Zvi Bretter and Gordon Lee: Approaching and Interpreting the Bible

Is it simply enough to understand the Bible through our own cognition and interpretation? Or is there more that we need to carefully consider and acquire before accessing the key to truthfully understanding God's word? In the first reading, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee, there is a lot of truth to uncover and misconceptions to face. Gordon Fee presents these aspects very well from a faithful Christian standpoint. For instance, he demonstrates how a lot of people say that we don't have to interpret the Bible, and that God's word is simple enough to understand. This is true in the sense that sometimes we understand concepts too well instead of applying them. Often, the problem is not in understanding the text, but rather understanding and obeying it. However, the goal of good interpretation is to grasp the original meaning of the text rather than discovering uniqueness. This would be the author's meaning of the text. Simply finding something that sounds different than what everyone else came up with is a result of probably one of three things: pride, an incorrect comprehension of spirituality, or personal gain/interest. We tend to bring our experiences to the text, rather than discovering the original meaning of the text. For one example, when we think of the flesh, we think of the body, but Paul used the word "flesh" to describe the sinful nature within us. These dueling translations may often reflect differences within Bible-believing Christians, such as the security of eternity vs. losing one's salvation. If any of these differences twist the Gospels or the topic of salvation, someone who believes these differences may be unknowingly following a cult. A good illustration of this would be the health and wealth gospel, in which one believes that if they are Christian, they will be blessed financially. This is a common cult, and the

misunderstanding is when people read 3 John 2 out of context, as they find their own meaning in what a prospering soul entails. This scenario demonstrates how it is simply not enough to understand the Bible through our own cultural and personal experiences. If we literally made our own experiences our interpretation of God's word, we would see God's word mainly as a human book with man's words instead of the living, holy word of God. However, God speaks to us through the truths in His word, and it is a hopeful thing that the Bible has a human side we can understand through history, geology, psalms, proverbs, etc. Interpreting God's word through exegesis is significantly important in discovering the Bible's original meaning. As humans, we always have our own interpretations and biases, and it requires a sense of humility to put aside our assumptions and search for the truth. The second reading from Brettler's *How to Read the Bible* presents a contrasting approach from the first reading by Gordon Lee in the understanding that the first reading focuses on salvation and interpreting the Gospels, and the second reading focuses on the Torah. Examining the true meaning of the Torah clarifies many misconceptions. For example, when readers come across a name such as the Torah, they get the wrong impression because they translate the Torah as the "Law," yet the Torah has more aspects than just legal and restrictive concepts. There are elements of poetry, narration, history and culture that readers interpret wrong, placing all of these elements into a box they call the "Law." Brettler treats the Bible as more than just a reading of the Law. In fact, for him, Brettler appreciates the tripartite structure of the Jewish Bible, dividing Genesis through Chronicles into three separate parts. He appreciates this as it gives a logical flow in presenting the narratives and history of these books. To Gordon Lee, however, he focuses on interpreting the salvation we believe in as he presents a dichotomy between the security of eternity vs. salvation. Both authors present significant key aspects crucial to understanding and interpreting God's word for generations to come.

Bibliography:

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