

Postscript

In this book I have sought to demonstrate principles for handling the scriptures which lead to good and right interpretations. I have attempted to show how applying these principles brings out the main themes of the Bible. I have tried to chop down some of the weeds which have obscured these main themes.

Now it is for you to say whether I have succeeded in these aims. At the end of Chapter 2 I suggested a list of principles for considering a particular teaching or theme. These were the following:

- 1 Start with what is clear.
- 2 Examine the context of the rest of the Bible.
- 3 Consider the context of the world around us.
- 4 Examine how broad the foundation is.
- 5 Be prepared to admit your ignorance.
- 6 How much does it matter?

I have tried to keep to these principles when considering Biblical themes throughout this book. In particular, the following themes showed themselves as being sewed through and through the Bible:

- a Christ is the *major theme* of all the scriptures.
- b Christ offered *one sacrifice* for sin, once for all.
- c There is *one way of salvation* through Christ.
- d There is *one people of God*, the whole church of Christ, Jew and Gentile.
- e We are now *not under the Law, but under grace*.

If you disagreed with my conclusions in particular chapters, then you need to consider whether I have strayed from my principles, or else whether these principles are not right, or whether the list of principles is incomplete.

Some would say that the list certainly is incomplete. There are three other possibilities which keep pushing themselves forward as principles. We have encountered them in many places within this book, and have rejected them. It is only right that now they should be unmasked and recognised as the impostors which they are.

A ‘Interpret as literally as you can’

We saw in Chapter 2 that it is impossible to interpret all of the Bible literally. If you try to do so, you make the Bible tear itself apart. The difficult task is knowing which parts to interpret literally and which figuratively. Where did you get the idea that you should interpret it as literally as possible? Does the Bible teach this? Certainly Christ did not (see John 6:63 for instance). The New Testament regularly gives spiritual interpretations for that which was literal and physical in the Old. If we seek

an interpretation which is as literal as possible, then we not only force a conflict between the Bible and the real world, we provoke conflict between different parts of the Bible. This false principle has the appearance of giving supreme honour to the scriptures, but instead it brings dishonour on them.

B ‘Give major emphasis to the Old Testament’

The Old Testament is the inspired word of God, just as the New is. However, we have been given a good pair of spectacles with which to read the Old: read it with the vision which the New Testament gives. When the Old Testament speaks of literal temple, priests, continual sacrifices, then the New Testament shows us the spiritual reality to which these should point us. In particular, the Law is the governing factor in the Old Testament; now it no longer holds sway over us, but is replaced by grace.

C ‘Let your traditions be supreme’

The traditions of your own church are no doubt precious to you. However, do not allow them to distort what the Bible is saying. Jesus accused some of nullifying the word of God for the sake of their tradition (Matthew 15:6). This also goes for the traditional teaching you have heard. You may have a great love and respect for the leaders from whom you have heard these things. But they are only human, after all, and they may be wrong. Be prepared to investigate their teachings in the light of the Bible and see whether their interpretations are wisely based.

As I said, you may have disagreed with the conclusions I reached in some of the chapters in this book. If you did, then consider that the disagreement may be because you have been giving ear to one or other of these three impostors. I beg you to consider whether these things are snagging your interpretation. It is vital for you to approach the scriptures aright because they ‘are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life through his name’ (John 20:31). Freeing yourself from these false principles may help you to get it straight—from the Bible.