

GLEANINGS — August 30, A.D. 2015  
Avoiding Bible Blunders, Part Two

Last week we began to discuss the blunder of not recognizing the difference between literal and figurative language. The holy Bible uses both kinds of language to communicate infallible, inerrant, God-breathed and therefore fully authoritative truth. In the account of the parting of the Red Sea, we read that God miraculously caused two walls of water to form so that His covenant people could walk through that sea dryshod. We take those words literally.

But when Jesus said "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7) He did not mean that he was a physical portal in a wall or fence through which animals or humans might pass. He did not expect us to take Him literally. In saying "I am the door" (repeated at John 10:9), Christ was using figurative language. He was teaching that only by Him Who is also the good Shepherd can sheep pass from the dry valley of the shadow of death into the green pastures and still waters of life. He also used figurative speech in His parables and elsewhere.

Yet another Bible blunder is what we might call "textual tunnel vision." Those that fall into this pitfall seize upon a Biblical statement in isolation from its greater context, and from the whole counsel of God in Scripture.

For example, in His Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "do not swear at all." James (5:12) cites that command of the Master and under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit he adds, "...let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,' lest you fall into judgment."

Because of this Biblical precept, not to be taken lightly, some have taken the position that making one's 'Yes' or 'No' publicly solemn (such as in a court of law, or in taking marriage vows before God and man) is something a Christian cannot do under any circumstances.

Those taking this position should consider Deuteronomy 6:13 – "You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and **shall take oaths in His name**" (cf. Deuteronomy 10:20). In Jeremiah 4:1,2 God commends righteous swearing.

In Matthew 26:63, 64 the high priest adjures Jesus to "...tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, ADJURE means to command solemnly under or as if under oath or penalty of a curse (Cf. Joshua 6:26 in the King James translation.)

Jesus' response to the high priest is a bit more than a simple 'Yes.' He solemnly affirms Himself to be just that – the Christ, the Son of God – by applying to Himself a prophetic word recorded in the book of Daniel. This most solemn and dreadful affirmation by Jesus about the truth concerning Himself provokes the wicked high priest to accuse Him of blasphemy.

Let us both be like the Bereans who "searched the Scriptures to see whether these things be so," (Acts 17:11) and heed Paul's exhortation to Timothy – that he rightly divide [ *ascertain the intended meaning; interpret* ] the word of truth. (Cf. 2 Timothy 2:15)