

# Common Errors

Hermeneutics Pt.2

6-11-2009

## Review

This is a class on how to interpret the Bible, and the technical name for that is Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is something you have been doing all your life – it is nothing more than the study of how to interpret language. You have been using hermeneutics from the first day someone said something to you and you understood it.

You could hardly overstate the importance of hermeneutics. If your Creator has given you a message, what could possibly be more important than finding out what He said, and what He meant by what He said?

Last week we spend the entire time covering one basic principle: authorial intent. The only meaning is what the author meant to communicate to the original readers. That is the only meaning the text has ever had or ever will have. The meaning does not come from the reader but from the author. So when someone says, “What does this verse mean to you?” it is a dumb question. The passage means the same thing to everyone. Whatever the author was trying to communicate, that is the only thing it means or will ever mean.

When I said that last week the question came up about Scripture being living and active. If the meaning does not change from day to day, how is it that the same verse can speak to you in fresh ways over and over throughout your life? The answer is a passage has unlimited significance in your life because while the meaning always stays the same, the implications for your life change with circumstances and insight. For example, take John 3:16. What does the verse mean? It means God love the world so much that He gave His only Son so that whoever believes will not perish but have eternal life. That is the only thing it has ever meant or will ever mean.

However, one day you might read that verse and think, *God gave His Son out of love*. That means He loved me at least 2000 years before I was born. He loved me prior to my loving Him. And that is significant in my life right now because we just got some new neighbors who don't like me, and I realize that I can love them prior to their loving me.

A month later you can read that verse and think, *God so loved the world that He gave*. His giving was compelled by His love. And that is just what I need to hear this morning because in my life lately all my giving has been done out of duty, not love.

A couple weeks later you read John 3:16 and think, *God so love the world that He gave his only Son!* God had to give His Son to save me? How massive must have been my debt if it required a price that high? And that is just what I need to hear today because lately I have been tending to take sin kind of lightly.

And another day you read it and think, *God so loved the world that He gave His only Son* – how incredibly valuable salvation must be to God! It is that important to Him? That is just what I needed today because recently I have fallen into taking salvation for granted.

Did the meaning or interpretation change? No – all those applications come from the exact same interpretation.

And the way to determine the correct interpretation is by assuming that God communicated through the normal use of language. If He did not – if there is some hidden message or some special, different way of using language, then we can never know what God meant. God communicated in order to be understood, and so there is no reason to assume anything other than the normal use of language.

## Chapter 2 Common Errors

### 1. Eisogesis

The purpose of Bible study is *exegesis* (ex = “out” – you get a thought out of the text. The idea comes out of the text and into your mind). *Eisogesis* (eis = “in” – an idea originates in your mind, and you read it into the text). When a Bible interpreter does eisogesis, that is like a police detective planting evidence at a crime scene. Your job is to discover and interpret what is there, not to put things there. So eisogesis is planting meaning that was not put there by the author.

This was a problem way back in Peter's day:

**2 Peter 3:16 [Paul] writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.**

People were distorting the Scriptures. That word “distort” is a very picturesque word. It literally means to torture on the rack. You want to get someone to confess to a crime he didn’t really commit, he refuses, and so you put him on the rack, which was a device designed to stretch or twist the person’s body until the person could no longer stand the pain and he would say whatever you wanted him to say. Peter says that is what some people do to the Bible. They put it on the rack and torture it, and twist it and stretch it until they can finally get it to say what they want it to say. And Peter says those people are **ignorant** and **unstable**.

Be very, very careful when you get into a theological debate. It is when people are trying to prove their view on something that they are tempted to do this. It is so easy to tweak the words of Scripture just a little bit when you need a zinger in a biblical debate. It is much, much better to lose the debate than to misuse God’s Word.

### **Examples of Eisogesis:**

- **Planting a theological bias into a passage**

In many seminaries if you sign up for a class on hermeneutics you will get half way through the class and think, “Did I wander into the wrong classroom? Did I wander into a theology class by accident?” You will think that because they spend the whole time going over theological systems – Calvinism, Arminianism, Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, Amillennialism, Reformed, Lutheran, Charismatic, Dispensationalism, etc. And the reason they do that is because they believe that first you hook yourself up to a theological system, and from there you interpret each passage of Scripture in accordance with what that system calls for. That is backwards.

When people who are committed to Arminian theology come across passages that teach the sovereignty of God, or election or predestination, they tend to come up with bizarre interpretations of those passages so they can be comfortable in their arminianism. They cannot let the passage just mean what it says, because that would upset their theological system. So they see a simple statement that says God predestined something, and they interpret it to mean that first God checked to make sure that thing was already going to happen, then He gave it the OK. You would never find an idea like that in the text itself. It was forced upon the text by the interpreter’s theology.

The same thing happens in the other direction. When some Calvinists encounter passages that warn Christians against falling away, or some strong statement about free will or human causation, they come up with all kinds of strange interpretations, because allowing the text to just mean what it appears to say would violate their system. The more committed you are to a theological system, the more you will be tempted to plant your theology in texts where it doesn’t exist.

- **Planting allegorical meanings into a passage**

Thankfully, this is not as common as it once was. A great example of allegorical interpretation is Pope Gregory’s interpretation of Job. He said that Job’s three friends represent the heretics. The seven sons are the 12 apostles. The 7000 sheep are God’s faithful people and his 3000 humpback camels are the depraved gentiles. Obviously, by that method all of the meaning comes from your own head and none of it comes from the text.

When people use this method of interpretation you can have 100 different people interpret a passage of Scripture and they will come up with 100 different interpretations. And that is because the interpretation is coming out of their own head rather than out of the text.

- **Planting Bible Codes**

Once I turned on TBN and heard the Crouches get all excited about the fact that their names and anniversary were in the Bible codes. When the Holy Spirit moved through the prophets of old to pen Holy Scripture was it really His intention to communicate to the world the Crouches’ names and wedding

anniversary? I don't think so. The messages from the Bible codes cannot be found unless you first think of them, and then look for them. That is eisogesis.

- **Planting a psychological theory into the Bible**

I recently looked on a Christian counseling website that purported to be Bible-based. They were "interpreting" Matthew 26:35 where Peter claims he will never deny Christ. The writer's main point was that Peter's words were motivated by fear. There is no hint of anything about fear anywhere in the context. The nearest mention of the word is *twelve chapters* prior. The writer made the point about fear not because he found it in the text, but because it was a part of his psychological beliefs and he forced it into the text.

- **Planting scientific theory into the Bible**

Very often people start with a preconception of the way things are that they got from some scientific theory, and then try to make it fit the Bible.

**Two illustrations:**

Up until the time of Copernicus, all the major scientists insisted that the sun revolved around the earth. The scientific community almost unanimously held to that theory, and a brilliant scientist by the name of Ptolemy had come up with what seemed like irrefutable proofs. The Christians didn't want people to think they were dummies, and they wanted the respect of the scientific community, so they not only bought into that theory, but they read it into the Bible. They twisted Bible passages to make it appear like they were teaching that scientific theory. Then along came Copernicus, who postulated that the earth revolved around the Sun. That idea was verified when Galileo made advances in telescopes, and you had the ridiculous situation where the theologians refused to look through the telescopes and see for themselves, because they had painted themselves into a corner by suggesting that the Bible taught a geocentric solar system.

Now the Church is making the same mistake again. The popular scientific theory of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is that the earth is millions of years old, and that everything came to be the way it is through evolution. Again, some Christians, eager to gain the acceptance of the scientific community, are trying to make the Bible teach evolution. To do so, they have come up with the day/age theory of Genesis 1. I am not saying everyone who holds to the possibility of an old earth has done that. My point is that those who do do it are wrong. If science dictates what you believe, and you then press that into Scripture, you are guilty of eisogesis.

In my opinion, there is nothing in a plain reading of Genesis 1 that would bring a person to interpret the creation week as millions of years. I am not aware of any argument that can be made that the original readers would have understood it that way.

- **Planting material from books and experiences**

A similar form of eisogesis is done by thousands of pastors every week. They begin studying their text of Scripture for that week, and not long into their study they think, *There isn't anything really interesting here.* And no preacher wants to be boring, so instead of just trusting God's Word to be interesting to God's people, and instead of just believing that if they study diligently God will show them wonderful things from that text, they bail out and revert to some other source. They pull some book from Max Lucado or Swindoll or Philip Yancey or whoever their favorite author is and try to find something good from them. Then they build the sermon around that, but make it look like it is coming out of the Bible text.

Or sometimes it happens the other way around. They hear some really good sermon, or they have some amazing experience on their family vacation that makes a great sermon illustration, or they come across some profound thought in their reading, so they just attach a bunch of Bible verses to that and present...

The most common kind of eisogesis, and the hardest to avoid:

- **Planting a good, sound, biblical idea into a text**

I once taught an expositors' class on Colossians 2:6-7, which talks about being rooted in Christ. As we were thinking through what it means to be rooted, we came to the conclusion that in that context it means to be rooted in the sense of being firmly established. But then we also got to thinking about all the wonderful points

we could make by making analogies between tree roots and the Christian life. For example, tree roots supply the tree with nourishment. In the same way we draw nourishment from Christ.

It is an extremely strong temptation for a Bible teacher, in a case like that, to make a big point about drawing nourishment from Christ. It is a strong temptation because that would really “preach.” Every teacher wants to have good material, and that seems like especially good material. Some of the people in the class had come up with some fantastic points of application about nourishment from Christ, and could not wait to teach them. You could see the disappointment (almost disbelief) when they realized they wouldn’t be able to teach that material. Very few Bible teachers and pastors have the discipline to delete material like that from their notes if it really is not something that the passage itself is teaching.

Planting evidence at a crime scene is against the law and an immoral thing to do; planting evidence in God’s Word is far worse.

## **But what about the analogy of faith or natural revelation?**

At this point you might think, “What so bad about teaching an idea from somewhere else in Scripture? It is not wrong (in fact it is wise) to compare your final conclusions from a passage to what the rest of the Bible says or to what you know to be true from other sources. But that should be at the end of the process, not the beginning. Do proper hermeneutics first, find out what the passage means, and then compare your conclusions to the rest of Scripture.

And I would say the same about your theological system. We all have a theological system, and it is not wrong to use that in your efforts to interpret the Bible. But you just need to make sure you do not use it too soon. First do proper hermeneutics, find out what the passage means, and then compare your conclusions to your theological system.

And when you compare your conclusion to the rest of Scripture or to your theological system, if you find a discrepancy, *don’t just change your conclusion!* You need to find where you made your error. If you were sitting in math class working on a test, and the instructor said you are free to work with each other to find the right answers, and the guy next to you, who is on your level in math skill, has a different answer than yours, it would be foolish for you to just change your answer or for him to change his. You should both search your work to find the error.

## **2. Ignoring Context**

So the first common error is planting evidence. The second is ignoring context. I know of a pastor in our area who slept with the church organist. I asked him to his face if it was true. He admitted yes, it was. What do you think about a man like that?

By the way, one more piece of information: the organist was (and is) his wife. Context matters.

### ***The immediate context***

#### ***Example #1:***

In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul talks about the possibility of being disqualified, and there is much discussion over the question of what he means by “disqualified.” Taking into consideration the context, however, the answer becomes obvious. The very next verse (10:1) begins with the word *for*, which means he is going to explain what he just said. He then goes on to describe what happened to most Israelites at the time of the Exodus. That is what Paul is guarding himself against.

#### ***Example #2:***

**Matthew 18:20 – Where 2 or 3 come together in My name, there I am...**

This is not talking about a small group worship service. The two or three are the witnesses to the church discipline.

### ***The context of the book***

“**faith alone**” in James is not the same thing as “**faith alone**” in Paul. Paul uses that phrase in the context of establishing the fact that you cannot earn salvation through works. James uses the phrase in the context of a

discussion about the fact that faith that does not result in works is not real faith. When John talks about faith, sometimes he refers to faith, sometimes he refers to faith from the human perspective and other times faith from the divine perspective (some people think they believe when they really don't).

**John 2:23-3:36 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. 24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. 25 He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.**

That seems like a strange statement. They believed, which is exactly what the purpose of John's book is (Jn.20:31). But he makes it look like a negative thing in verses 24-25. What are we to make of that? The next chapter gives us an example of one of these people.

**3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."**

In other words, "We've seen the signs and we believe."

**10 ...you do not understand these things**

**11 ...you people do not accept our testimony.**

**12 ...you do not believe**

So 2:23 talks about people who know who Jesus is and believe. But then one of those people comes to Jesus and says, "We know who you are and we believe," and Jesus says, "No, you don't know, and don't believe." That language is established at the beginning of the book, so as you move through the rest of John and read about people believing, you need to have that in mind.

### *The literary context*

God did not intend Proverbs to be interpreted the same way you interpret John. And Psalms is much different than Proverbs. You do not interpret prophecy the same way as historical narrative. You do not interpret parables the same as an epistle.

### *Cultural/historical context*

We are reading "over the shoulder" of the original recipients. Like reading someone else's mail or listening to one side of a phone conversation, to understand you have to learn as much as you can about the historical context. Some passages cannot be properly understood without a knowledge of the political context. Some passages require an understanding of the way an agricultural society thinks. You would not pick up on the significance of the arrival of the Magi unless you know the Magi were powerful kingmakers from the rival of Rome in the East. In every culture, statements convey not only ideas, but also emotional impact. Imagine the impact of a drought on a poor, agrarian society, or for the Old Testament Jews of Isaiah's time to hear God say "I hate your animal sacrifices."

Most people interpret Revelation 3:16 to be a passage about zeal.

**Revelation 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.**

But when we ask how this would have been understood by the original readers we find that the hot springs from Hierapolis and the cold streams near Colossae were both desirable and useful. By the time the water from those two sources reached Laodicia, it was tepid, putrid and nauseating. The contrast was between something that is useful (like hot or cold water) and something that is worthless (like lukewarm water). When we make hot = zeal and cold = hostility and lukewarm = indifference, that is arbitrary. The point is not that Jesus is saying, "Both zeal or hostility are fine, but not indifference." He is saying, "You have become as

worthless and disgusting as the water that flows into your city.” (Immediate context also plays a role in understanding this. If you read the rest of the letter, nothing is said about apathy. Their problem – the thing that made them so worthless – pride.) This is one reason why commentaries are so important.

### *The Context of Scripture*

I said a moment ago that the main things are the plain things and the plain things are the main things. The essentials of the gospel are said so many times, in so many ways, in so many contexts, that if you keep the breadth of Scripture before you, and you have a submissive attitude, you will not get into heresy. You may develop a little heresy in some interpretation, but the rest of Scripture will douse the flames. The more you know God’s Word, the clearer everything becomes. You need knowledge of Scripture to properly interpret various passages, but you need to be able to properly interpret various passages to have a correct knowledge of Scripture as a whole. It is a hard cycle to get started (like getting experience to get a job). But once it gets rolling, it feeds on itself. One popular Hermeneutics textbook is entitled “The Hermeneutical Spiral” (by Grant Osborn). The point of that title is to illustrate the fact that interpretation is the process of zeroing in on the meaning of a text as you learn more. If I study Romans 5 today and then study it again in five years, I will learn as much (if not more) the second time as I did the first – even if I limit myself to all the same commentaries. During those five years I learn more things about the cultural background, the Greek language, what the rest of Scripture teaches, etc. So some things that did not mean much to me the first time will unlock all kinds of meaning the second time.

### **3. Giving too high a priority to remote context**

A third common error is giving too high a priority to remote context. Near context gives you more information than remote context. For example, in Romans there is much discussion of the Mosaic Law. It is mentioned dozens of times. So when you see the word “law” it is almost a sure bet it is talking about the Old Testament Law. So when we get to Romans 7:21 **So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me**, we have to decide how to interpret the word “law.” The broad context of the book would point us in the direction of the Mosaic Law. But the nearer context of the paragraph makes better sense if we just interpret it as “principle.” And the nearer context carries more weight.

Keep in mind, Bible writers are allowed to use a word in different ways – just like you do. The average American has a vocabulary of something like 50,000 words. But linguists have shown that in that person’s lifetime he will express four to five million different ideas with those 50,000 words.<sup>1</sup> Obviously the same words used in different ways can convey different meaning.

If over the last three weeks Tracy and I have spent hours and hours discussing some church discipline situation, but in the last 30 minutes we have been discussing what kind of punishment one of our kids will get for disobeying, and at that moment I talk about disciplining my child, which kind of discipline do you think I am talking about? Punishing the child. That would be obvious, because that is the immediate context.

The way some people get carried away with word studies, they would interpret my words as having to refer to church discipline, because over the last few weeks I’ve used that word 85% of the time to refer to church discipline and only 15% to refer to family discipline. That is not how language works. The nearer the context, the more weight it carries. One example of this error is in a dramatic monologue I once heard. The point of the monologue was that in Timothy it says, “Preach the Word” and John says Jesus is the Word, therefore what we are to do is preach Jesus. I am all for preaching Christ, but that is not a valid way to interpret Timothy. Timothy is talking about Scripture.

Prophecy teachers are often guilty of this. The reason there is so much confusion about end times is because people take individual verses out of context from Daniel, Revelation, Matthew 24, Thessalonians, Ezekiel, and arrange them like a jigsaw puzzle to fit their system. The correct approach would be to determine what does Matthew 24, 25 as a whole say about end times, what does Daniel as a whole say, Revelation as a whole, etc. Then arrange those truths together into a system.

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<sup>1</sup> Osborn p.72

## 4. Confusing figurative and literal speech

What would you say if someone asked you, “Do you take the Bible literally?” Most of us would say “yes,” because we want people to know that we don’t regard the Bible as some fairy tale or book of myths or fables. The history is true.

And so we are so committed to a literal interpretation that we sometimes take things literally that weren’t intended literally. The Bible is loaded with figures of speech. When it talks about God being a rock we don’t assume He is an impersonal chunk of basalt or limestone. It is a figure of speech.

The most accurate answer to the question, “Do you take the Bible literally is, ‘The parts that are presented as literal I take literally. The parts that are figurative I take as figurative. Sections that are presented as parables I take as parables. Sections that are presented as actual history I take as actual history. You see, I give the Bible the same courtesy I give you. If you tell me something I strive to take it in the manner you meant it. If you were joking I take it as a joke. If you were serious I take it seriously. If you were giving an illustration I take it as an illustration.’

Then the question is, “How do you know which parts are literal and which parts are figurative?” We will spend a whole lesson just on that. But for now I will just say this: Assume the author meant you to take what he said literally unless it doesn’t make sense literally, but makes good sense figuratively. If Jesus calls the Pharisees whitewashed tombs, it does not make sense to think that Jesus was trying to say they were literally physical gravesites rather than human beings. But in context it makes perfect sense to interpret that as a figure of speech – they are human beings who resemble tombs in some way. And when you discover what way, you have just interpreted the figure of speech (in that case, they resemble tombs in that they are unclean and defiled).

## 5. Mis-defining words

When people first start out teaching the Bible this is a very common error, because it is so easy to get carried away with a word study. Someone will get a concordance out, chase a word all over the Bible, and pick up every interesting little idea that is connected to that word, and they have a ton of great material for their Bible study. One of the most dangerous people there is is a Bible study teacher who has a concordance but no understanding of hermeneutics. When people do that, everybody thinks it is an expository message, biblical and insightful. But in many cases it is just plain wrong.

Keep in mind; words in themselves do not have any meaning. When someone says, “What does that word mean?” the technically correct answer to that question is “nothing.” A word by itself has no meaning. Meaning is defined as the message intended by the one communicating. Meaning can only come from someone with a brain, and words don’t have brains.

When we ask “what does that word mean” what we are really asking is, “What meaning is that word normally used to convey?” For example, what does the word “chair” mean? By itself it does not mean anything. But what meaning is that word normally used to convey? Sometimes we use that word to convey the idea of an object to sit on. Other times it can be used as a verb to describe the action of heading up the committee. The meaning comes from the one who said or wrote the word – not from the word itself.

Does that mean dictionaries are worthless? No, because they tell you the range of ideas that the word is normally used to convey. If you want to convey the idea of a big balloon filled with hot air, chair is not the right word.

So when you hear someone talking, how could you possibly know if he is using it the first way or second way (context)?

### *Over defining*

Many words have multiple meanings and the eager Bible teacher who is desperate for enough material for a whole lesson will sometimes act as if the writer intended all the possible meanings of a particular word.

**Colossians 2:6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.**

If you look up all the uses of the word **strengthened** (New American Standard **established**) it becomes clear that it has two different meanings:

“To establish something in the sense of confirming its validity”

“To establish something in the sense of strengthening it and making it strong and steadfast.”

That word is used seven other times in the New Testament. Four of those times it is used in the first way:

**Mark 16:20** Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

**Romans 15:8** For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs

**1 Corinthians 1:6** because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you.

**Hebrews 2:3** how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

The other three it is used in the second way:

**1 Corinthians 1:8** He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 1:21** Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us,

**Hebrews 13:9** Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them.

**So, if we are studying Colossians 2:7, the big question is which definition do we apply there? The vast majority of Bible teachers will choose whichever one fits what they really want to say. If they have some great thoughts about being strengthened as a Christian, they will go with meaning #2. And as you listen you will be convinced, because they will cite that second group of passages. Eisogesis**

If they have some great thoughts about being confirmed and validated in Christ, they will go with meaning #1, and cite those other references. In fact, a lot of Bible teachers will do both. That really gives them a lot of material. So point #1 in their outline is “We are strengthened in Christ.” Then they say, “Now let me show you another insight into this word” and point #2 in their outline is “We are confirmed in Christ.” That is a misuse of Scripture. Not every word means all of its possible meanings in every context.

If I tell Tracy I put something in the trunk, either I mean the trunk of our car, or a chest or an elephant trunk (if we are at the zoo), but whichever one of those I had in mind – I only meant one of them. Not all of them. Bible writers are the same way. There are some rare examples of a Bible writer leaving a term ambiguous because he wants to call to mind two meanings of a word, but that is rare. And if you come to the conclusion that that is happening, you have to be able to demonstrate that from the context. Just because a word has a meaning somewhere does not mean it has that meaning here. When 1 Corinthians 11 says the man is the head of the woman, some feminist scholars have waded through hundreds of secular Greek sources until they found some examples of that Greek word for “head” used in the sense of “source.” Then they press that meaning into 1 Corinthians 11, and say the man is the source of the woman (she came from his rib), and that it has nothing to do with authority. Again, that is not how language works. If you want to come to the conclusion that Paul is saying something about source, you have to show that from the context of 1 Corinthians 11. [The correct approach in a passage like Colossians 2:7 is to look at the other uses of that word in Scripture and discern under what circumstances the word has one meaning or the other. In this case, the word means “confirmed” when referring to an idea and “strengthened” when referring to a person.]

***The “root fallacy”***



Describing the root of a word can be helpful for illustrating the meaning of a word, but the meaning is not determined by the root or etymology. The word “ranch” comes from the same root as the word “deranged.” But that does not mean ranchers are always a little unbalanced mentally. The word “clergy” comes from the Indo-European root *kel* (“to strike”). It is related to the word “calamity.” *Clearly* there can be no connection at all drawn there. Our word “ballet” comes from the same Greek root as *Diabolos* (Devil). Word meaning is determined by *contemporary* usage. I say “contemporary” because word meanings can change over time. Back when the King James Version was translated “conversation” meant “way of life” and “prevent” meant “precede.” Just recently in our popular usage the word “quantum” went from meaning miniscule to meaning “huge.” The word “scan” used to mean, “to read very slowly and carefully.” Now it means the opposite.

It can be anachronistic to read a later or earlier meaning is read into a word. One of the most obvious examples is when preachers get to the Greek word *dynamis* and start talking about dynamite. I have heard pastors say that that Greek word, in some Bible verse, refers to *explosive* power from God, based on the fact that it is the root of our word dynamite. The word has nothing to do with explosiveness. It refers to ability or authority.

**Hebrews 5:2 He is able (*dynamai*) to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.**

Does that mean God has explosive ability to be gentle? Another common one is *hyperetas*.

**1 Corinthians 4:1 So then, men ought to regard us as servants (*hyperetas*) of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God.**

Many of you have probably heard a preacher say “This word comes from the words hyper (under) and *eressa* (to row), so it refers to an “under rower” - a third-level galley slave – the guy who rows at the lowest level.” Then they go on about Paul’s humility in calling himself the lowest kind of slave. The problem is, that word is used 20 times in the New Testament, and it never means anything like that. In fact, most of the time it is translated “officer” or “official.”

**John 18:12 Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials (*hyperetas*) arrested Jesus.**

So in the New Testament it refers to an attendant or some kind of ranking official. It is not a lowly term at all. The idea of an under-rower never appears in any use of this word in any Greek writing of any time anywhere. But that idea is still widely preached, because it really preaches.

Next week: steps to correct interpretation

#### Homework

Listen to a sermon on the radio and write down a point that was clearly intended by the author, and another point that was “planted.”

#### Review Question

If a word has two different uses, how do you determine which is being used in a specific passage? (Practice with the exercise on the next page with *paradidomi*.)

The word *paradidomi* (παραδίδωμι) is used 119 times in the New Testament. Sometimes it means “betray,” and other times it does not. Below is a sampling of the various ways it is used. Using only the references below, determine how one should decide under what conditions it means “betray.” Respond to the following argument: Paul was a traitor and betrayer. The same word is used of his actions as those of Judas:

**John 18:2** Now Judas, who betrayed (παραδίδωμι) him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples...5 "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor (παραδίδωμι) was standing there with them.)

**1 Timothy 1:20** Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over (παραδίδωμι) to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

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**Matthew 5:25** "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

**10:4** Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

**17** "Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues.

**21** "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.

**11:27** "All things have been committed to me by my Father.

**17:22** When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.

**18:34** In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

**20:18** "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death **19** and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

**24:9** "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. **10** At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,

**25:14** "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.

**26:2** "As you know, the Passover is two days away-- and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

**15** and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. **16** From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

**21 And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."**

**Mark 4:29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."**

**7:13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."**

**Luke 1:2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.**

**Luke 4:6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.**

**21:16 You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.**

**John 18:2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.**

**5 "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)**

**19:30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**

**Acts 6:14 For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us."**

**8:3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.**

**14:26 From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.**

**15:26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.**

**16:4 As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.**

**Romans 1:24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.**

**26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.**

**28 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.**

**6:17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.**

**8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?**

**1 Corinthians 5:5 hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.**

**11:2 I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you.**

**23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,**

**13:3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.**

**24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.**

**2 Corinthians 4:11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.**

**Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

**Ephesians 4:19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.**

**5:2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

**1 Peter 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.**

**Jude 1:3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.**