

# The BEACON

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By the Newton church of Christ PO Box 893, 28658 Meeting at: 656 St. James Church Rd.  
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## Why Do People Interpret The Bible Differently?



One man is a member of this church because of this Biblical reason, another is a member of that church because of that Biblical reason. One man believes or practices this, another believes or practices that.

Why do so many people study the same New Testament, but draw different conclusions?

Concerning interpreting the Bible, G.H. Schodde writes,

A person has interpreted the thoughts of another when he has in his own mind a correct reproduction or photograph of the thought as it was conceived in the mind of the original writer or speaker. It is accordingly a purely reproductive process, involving no originality of thought on the part of the interpreter. If the latter adds anything of his own it is eisegesis and not exegesis. The moment the Bible student has in his own mind what was in the mind of the author or authors of the Biblical books when these were written, he has interpreted the thought of the Scriptures. (1489)

If God is the author of Scripture, it is true (John 17:17) and anyone who disagrees with truth believes myths (2 Tim. 4:4). And if Scripture is true, then it does not contradict itself. There is only one systematic message in it; there is "one faith" (Eph. 4:5). God never intended for us to have different interpretations. Instead, His desire is "that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10, ESV).

If I interpret the Bible differently than you, it is either because God was incapable of giving us a book that we could agree upon, or because there is a problem in how one (or both) of us is studying it. I choose to believe the latter.

If God is the author of the Bible, then all diligent students who read the Bible correctly will come to the same conclusion. God does not in one place teach that baptism is essential to be saved, while in another place teach that baptism is optional. God does

not teach in one place that we can choose to obey Him, and then in another place teach that He nebulously predestines to save us individually. God does not in one place teach that a Christian can “fall from grace,” while in another place teach that a Christian can never lose his salvation. How could we have confidence in a man – let alone a God – who so contradicts himself?

The idea that there are equally valid different interpretations of Scripture has caused many to disbelieve that the Bible is the Word of God (cf. John 17:20-21).

If the Bible is really the Word of God, then we must believe that the problem of different interpretations rests not with the Bible, but with the people doing the interpreting.

Consider some reasons why there are so many different interpretations:

### **Ignorance**

Both Jesus and the Jewish leaders accepted the Old Testament as the Word of God, but they had different interpretations about the subject of the resurrection. Jesus told them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt. 22:29). Even the disciples of Jesus did not expect Him to rise from the dead because “they did not understand the Scripture” (John 20:9).

Many today – even religious leaders and scholars – know only the passages that seem to teach what they already believe, but have not fully considered the context of those passages or have not studied other passages that would reveal the full truth.

### **Disbelief**

Many refuse to believe in the power of God. They do not believe in the miracles recorded in Scripture, and the sovereignty of God over the physical world. Like the Pharisees who denied the irrefutable miracles of God (cf. Matt. 12:24-31) or the spectators who mocked the prophecies of Jesus as He hung on the cross (cf. Matt. 27:39-44), many rationalize away the supernatural power of God. This explains the ridiculous interpretations of the account of creation in Genesis 1 or the great flood in Genesis 6-7.

### **Sensationalism**

The disciples had different interpretations about whether or not Jesus said John would never die (cf. John 21:21-23). The apostle John wrote, “yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?” Why did some think Jesus said that John would never die? They wanted to believe the sensational.

Love for sensationalism is what drives many different interpretations. The “Left Behind” books and movies are popular because the false teaching of a supposed “rapture” is

sensational. Great crowds will show up to churches to hear about “The Meaning of 666,” “The End Of The World Is Near” or “The Anti-Christ and Israel,” even though such predictions or supposed signs are proven wrong over and over again.

### **Not Loving Truth**

Satan, the “father of lies” (John 8:44), had a different interpretation of Psalm 91:11-12 than Jesus, taking it to mean that Jesus could jump from the temple and not be hurt (Matt. 4:5-7). Satan pursued a lie, whereas Jesus loved the truth of God’s Word (John 6:38).

Today, there are plenty of people who simply do not love truth. As a result, they “twist to their own destruction” the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:16) and will be eternally lost (2 Thess. 2:9-12).

### **Bad Attitudes Toward Scripture**

Many differences in religion are not a result of differing interpretations, but as a result of a low view of the exclusive authority of Scripture. To defend many of the different religious names people wear, the different churches they attend, and different practices they perform, they appeal not to Scripture, but to their own preferences. “Man can do whatever he wants in religion so long as the Bible does not specifically forbid it,” they say. How arrogant! These differences are not due to interpretation, but due to human additions to Christianity.

### **Conclusion**

While many are honest in their interpretations, it is still possible that they are honestly mistaken. The most important requirement in correctly interpreting the Bible is the desire to know and do God’s will. Jesus said,

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (Matt. 5:6, ESV)

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## **Do you understand the church of Christ?**

If you think the church of Christ is a denomination you do not understand it. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, “I will build my church” and no one thinks he was talking about any denomination when he said that. We never think of the church in



Jerusalem that we read about in Acts 2 as a denomination. It was composed of men and women who had believed, repented, and had been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin and who made it a practice to gathered together for teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers; it was a just a church. From the Jerusalem church Christians went out teaching the gospel and gathering together as churches in Damascus, Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome and many other places. None of the churches in any of these places were denominations; none of them were a part of any denomination; and none of the Christians in any of these churches ever joined any denomination. They never identified themselves as a denomination; they were “churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16).

If they can do that, then we can do that. In fact, it is easier to be a church of Christ than it is to be a denomination. Think about it, if you want to be a denomination you have to think up a distinctive denominational name, write yourselves a set of by-laws, select your officers, and write a creed that everyone wanting to be in that denomination can subscribe to. It is a lot of work; and after you have done it you do not have anything better than the church of Christ, and you will not have anything that good. You will never convince anyone that Jesus died for your denomination, because he did not, and you know he did not.

True Churches of Christ are careful to have the authority of Christ for what they teach and practice. That is why they spend so much time studying their Bibles. They look through the New Testament for authorized patterns of work and worship that are logically implied by commandments, approved examples or by necessary implication. Churches of Christ are what they are, and they have always been what they are, because of what Christ and his apostles taught in the New Testament. They have never been denominational. You have to understand that to understand a church of Christ; but do not take our word for it, attend any of the services and see for yourself. (Bill Boyd)

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## **Things the “thousand years” of Revelation 20 cannot be....**

Revelation 20 is in the same apocalyptic language as the rest of the book. With a few exceptions the interpretations of these symbols are not given and we are left to cautious speculation for suggestions of their possible meanings. However we can know that none of these things symbolize anything that is contrary to what the Bible already teaches. That is how we know that there are some things the “thousand years” of Revelation 20 cannot be. For example:

- This is not when God will fulfill his promise to Abraham that his descendants will possess the land because that was fulfilled in the days of Joshua. (Joshua 21:43-45; 23:14-16; 2 Samuel 8:3, 14-15; 1 Chronicles 18:3; 1 Kings 4:21; 2 Chronicles 9:26; Nehemiah 9:7-8)
- This is not the time God will fulfill his promise to restore the Jews to their homeland because that was fulfilled when the Jews returned from Babylon. (Jeremiah 25:11, 2 Chronicles 36:20-21; Daniel 9:2; Ezra 1:1)
- This is not the end of the church age and the beginning of the kingdom age because the church is the kingdom. (Matthew 16:18-19, Matthew 16:28; Mark 14:25; 1 Corinthians 10:16, Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28)
- This is not when Christ will serve as a priest on the earth because Christ cannot be a priest on earth. (Psalm 110; Zechariah 6:13; Hebrews 8:4)
- This is not when Christ will return to the earth to reign as a king in Jerusalem because no seed of Coniah will set on the throne in Judea and Christ is already on the throne in heaven. (Jeremiah 22:29-30, Acts 2:29-36)
- This is not a time between the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust because they will be raised by the same voice the same hour. (John 5:28-29)
- This is not a period of time that begins with the second coming of Christ because that will be the last trumpet when the kingdom will be delivered to the father and the earth will be dissolved. 1 Corinthians 15:23-26, 51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Peter 3:10-12
- This cannot be the one hope of the Gospel because that home is in heaven. (Ephesians 4:4; 1 Peter 1:3-4)

Revelation 20:1-10 mentions a thousand years six times, but it does so in the midst of apocalyptic symbols. It does not mention a literal thousand years, neither does it mention a rapture, nor the second coming of Christ, nor the return of Israel to its homeland, nor the rebuilding of the temple, nor an earthly reign of Christ, nor a literal throne, nor the city of Jerusalem, nor a bodily resurrection from the grave, neither does it mention us. Note verse 4: those who lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years were the souls of them that were beheaded. If the beheading is literal then we are not in the reign, and if the beheading is figurative then it is not a literal thousand years. This is an inadequate proof text for premillennialism.

(These are my thoughts after reading The Neal-Wallace Discussion on the Thousand Reign of Christ, The Story of the Fort Worth Debate by Foy E. Wallace Jr., and Robert Taylor's contribution to the lecture book of the First Annual Fort Worth Lectures, "Premillennialism, True or False.") (Bill Boyd)

# *Leaving A Legacy*

Mark 15:21 "They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross."

Mark records the Lord's journey to the place of His execution. Tired, beaten, scourged, Jesus struggles with the heavy cross beam of the cross that will hold His body in a very short time. Luke tells us that the cross was placed on Simon and he walked behind Jesus.

Simon was just an innocent person coming into Jerusalem. He most likely didn't know all that was going on. The Romans, in charge of the execution, grab Simon and make him bear the cross to Calvary. He must have thought, "Why, me? I'm not going that direction." He may have wondered; I hope they don't kill me as well.

What is interesting about our verse today from Mark, is that Simon does not seem to be an obscure person that had a moment in history and then disappeared. Mark mentions Alexander and Rufus, the sons of Simon. Mark writing to Christians, assumes his audience knows Alexander and Rufus. That thought, implies that Alexander and Rufus were Christians. Later, as Paul acknowledges many Christians in Romans, he writes, "Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine." The Rufus of Romans may well be the Rufus that Mark mentions. If that's the case, then his father carried Jesus' cross. In the aftermath of all of that, as the gospel message was told, spread and understood, Rufus became a Christian.

My dad carried Jesus' cross is something that Rufus would have grown up knowing. That fact, wouldn't punch his ticket into Heaven, nor would it even buy him a cup of coffee, but it is a personal connection and something that Mark wanted his readers to know. This event wasn't planned by the Romans. It was spontaneous, however, it was life changing. Those things often happen. The bent over woman who happened to be in the synagogue when Jesus was, healed and changed forever. That wasn't staged nor planned. The young man who had died and was being carried out to the cemetery, his grieving mother following with a sad crowd of mourners, crossed paths with Jesus and His disciples. Jesus interrupted the funeral procession, touched the coffin and told the young man to arise. Jesus spoke to the dead man and he heard and obeyed. Innocent coincidences that altered the destinies of many lives.

The same happens today. I have heard of folks leaving literature about the Bible on a bus or in a public bathroom. Someone comes along and finds it. They read it and in the process of time, they search out a church, a Bible study takes place and they become a

Christian. The one who left the literature hoped such would happen. Often, they are unaware of the good that is done. I know of others who listened to the gospel being preached on radio and TV broadcasts. They followed along in their Bibles as they listened. In time, their hearts were turned and they became a Christian. There is a lot of good that has been done in the past that was just like this.

One must wonder what happened to Simon after Calvary. Did he dump the cross once the crowd reached their destination and then scurry away to Jerusalem to tend to his business? Did he stick around to see what happened? Was he in the crowd when Jesus uttered, "My God, My God..." Did he make a connection to the darkening skies and the death of Jesus? Did he see the resurrected righteous coming into the city? Many emotions and heated words about Jesus filled the city.

The Bible doesn't give us "The Rest of the Story," with most events because that is not the intention of the Bible. We wonder. We wonder about Rufus, Simon's son. Was it because of dad that Rufus became a Christian and earned the powerful compliment from Paul, "a choice man in the Lord."

Building a bridge with that thought, what we do as parents, impacts the future of our children. We know that in theory, but it's the reality that we often overlook. Comments on the way home from worship, what we say about our church family, how engaged we are in the lives of others, how important things are to us, are picked up quickly and easily by younger eyes. They, more than anyone, can soon grasp how meaningful these things are to us. That becomes a measurement of how important these same things will be to them.

I remember sitting next to my dad during worship. He carried mints in his suit pocket. I'd reach in and help myself once in a while. I remember seeing my mom being baptized. That was a turning point in our family. Things were taken more seriously and we became more engaged when that happened. It's hard to know how much of an impression those things have on young hearts, but today I walk with the Lord. Many of us today are who we are because our dads carried the cross. Family choices were made. Church attendance wasn't something that was decided week to week, it was a given, we are going. Certain words, shows, friends were automatically off limits because we, as a family, were walking with Christ. Those decisions helped shape other decisions. Those decisions came with expectations. Our attitudes, words, and behavior was expected to be a certain high standard. We couldn't talk back to our parents. Cheating in school was never allowed. If we got in trouble, anywhere, we really got in trouble at home. On Sunday, we wore our "church clothes," and then changed into our play clothes when we got home. We were expected to sit up and be still during worship. If we were fussy, we got taken out and that wasn't a good thing. When we were older, we might get a polite and directed thump on our heads, which meant to straighten up. We knew. Preachers

and elders were like Moses and Abraham to us. Old, reverent and not to be messed with. They were always seen in dark suits. I remember the first time I saw a preacher in blue jeans. I thought he must have lost his faith. He happened to be cutting his yard. I guess I figured he wore his dark suit to mow the yard. To my generation, these scenes were our Simon's carrying the cross. Godly people doing their best for the Lord.

And now, we are the Rufus'. We have been shaped and molded in a positive way by these examples and impressions. Many of us are serving as deacons, elders, preachers, teachers and are busy raising godly families today.

Simon carried, Rufus became. There is a connection there. There is also a connection between what we do and what our children become. There is no greater blessing as a parent than to see your grown children, busy in the kingdom, teaching, leading, helping others to know the way of the Lord. I wonder if Simon lived long enough to see Rufus become a follower of Jesus? I hope so. Roger Shouse

## **THE NEED OF PARENTAL AUTHORITY**

H. Leo Boles, Gospel Advocate, April 30, 1931

Perhaps few subjects need to be stressed more than this one. Parents have lost sight of their responsibility to their children, and children are growing up to disregard all restraints and parental authority. In the general decline of respect for authority, both human and divine, which prevails to an alarming extent at the present time, and which threatens to involve in social anarchy and confusion all of the elements of society, it is woeful to observe an almost total failure on the part of parents to exercise their authority in controlling their children. One of the great causes of disrespect for all authority by young people today is the failure of parents to exercise authority over their children. The parent stands to the child, in the years of its character and habits, by the authority of God. God has enjoined upon parents that they exercise His authority over the child while it is young and tender. Children are most impressionable in youth, and the parent should not neglect the opportunity for training them.

If a child is not taught to respect the authority of a parent in its early years of life, or if it is allowed to follow its own will and to gratify its own desires and passions, that child will seldom be able to deny self and will be the slave of selfish passions and habits that will be destructive to good order in society and subversive of the divine law. In the human heart, as in the sin cursed soil, the briars, thistles, and thorns grow of themselves and choke out the tender plants that are desirable to promote the well-being here and hereafter. Parents should recognize this truth and should seek to restrain their children from all evil and selfish habits of life. The growth of obnoxious weeds in the human heart

must be checked and destroyed, or tender plants of truth and kindness will be choked out.

No parents would plant a garden with vegetables or flowers and let the weeds and grass grow and choke out the tender plants. No farmer will plant the seed in the soil and let all sorts of weeds and briars grow and destroy the tender plants. Yet many parents do this very thing with their children. They are more careful in cultivating their gardens and fields than they are in cultivating the hearts and lives of their children. No parent can please God by neglecting the children. No parent can train the children as God would have them trained without exercising prayerful care and authority over them. Only the just and prayerful exercise of parental authority over children can keep down the selfishness and evil habits and passions of childhood. Parents must exercise constant and watchful care over their children. No parent who fails to do this can wisely love his children. The tender hand of parental affection alone can nurture to their proper development and strength the plants of virtue and piety in the hearts of their children. Parents who fail to do this disobey God when He says: "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4) Not only do parents disobey God in failing to exercise proper authority over their children, but they also commit a crime against their children.

The parent that neglects to exercise proper authority and care over his children during the formative period is the most cruel enemy to the child that it will ever meet during life. Sometimes parents persuade themselves that they are good and kind to their children by not restraining them and punishing them as the child needs discipline. This is a mistake, and the day will come when the parent and the child will be made to realize that it was a mistake and heartless cruelty to let the child grow up unrestrained and develop evil habits which make it a menace to society. Thousands of young people are now in the jails and penitentiaries because parents failed to do their duty to their children. In many instances these young criminals can point to an overindulgent parent as being largely to blame for the shame and suffering that now must be endured. Many of these young criminals have a just cause for blaming the parent for not exercising parental authority over them while they were forming their youthful habits of life.

Parents are responsible for the life and oftentimes the destiny of their children. Parents certainly are responsible oftentimes for the success in society of their children. Children should be kept under the home influence of their parents. This argues that the home influence must be directed by the wisdom of God as revealed in the Bible. Parents should keep their children under their own influence. This means that the influence of parents must be that of Christians. Parents should be anxious about the company their children keep. They should firmly restrain their children from all evil influence and exercise with carefulness the parental authority by controlling the child. This should be done with

gentleness and affection. Parents should nurture in the hearts of their children a feeling of respect and love that will guide them safely and innocently through childhood and which will clothe their youth with sobriety, chastity, modesty, and honor, and which will crown their manhood or womanhood with integrity and uprightness. Parents are responsible if they do not give worth and respectability to their children.

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it," is the law of God, as certain and sure as any other law of heaven. To bring up a child "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" is to teach it the precepts of the Lord. It means to inspire in the heart of the child a holy reverence for God; it means to teach the child honesty, truthfulness, kindness, and mercy; and it means to teach the child self-denial, in simplicity of diet and dress, in habits of industry and economy. To "nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" is to train the children to be gentle, forbearing, and forgiving. It means to teach the children to find pleasure in denying self for the benefit of others; it includes teaching them reverence toward God and respect for age; and it means to teach them humility, gratefulness, and prayerfulness. By looking at the full content of this Scripture we will see the great responsibility of parents toward their children. Truth Magazine IV:2

## ONLY A VAPOR

There is nothing as insubstantial as a vapor. Usually, we see an appearance of vapor when we boil water or are cooking foods. It is interesting that James uses this illustration to remind us of a basic truth that is generally overlooked by many people. In James 4:14 he writes, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." It is interesting that James, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, takes the thing that we most often view in life as our substance, the physical body, and compares it to something that is not substantial, a vapor. Indeed, as we live life, we see the truth that this scripture presents. It may come from seeing our children reach adulthood and wondering where all the time went. It could come from seeing someone in their prime unexpectedly pass from this life. Either way, there are times in all our lives where we are forced to realize that what the scriptures say rings true - our life is like a vapor.

However, this is only half of what we must see if we are to live out this short life as God intends for us to. Yes, our life is brief relating to the time we have on earth, but it is also to be considered a vapor when thinking of the substance of our lives. We must realize that the substance of life is not contained just here on this earth. The substance of this life is our eternal soul. Just as the substance of vapor, is the water that it is born of, our

soul is the substance of our earthly body. It is that part of us that is eternal. Solomon tells us this in Ecclesiastes 12:7 where he writes, “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

It is this fact that should be of the utmost importance to us! Solomon said, “the spirit will return to God who gave it.” Our substance will not just be put into the ground, but will go back to almighty God who gave it. But what will He do with it? That is decided during this short time we are on this Earth. In II Corinthians 5:10, Paul states, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” God will judge our souls based on the actions we do in the body! This is what God will do with the spirit which Ecclesiastes 12:7 says will return to Him when we die. He will judge and sentence us to our eternal abode, whether it is Heaven or Hell. This means we are not without hope; it is in our power to decide our final resting place.

The most important thing that anyone can do in this life is to obey the Gospel of Christ. In fact, the scriptures speak of the end result of one who would not obey the gospel. In II Thessalonians 1:7-8 Paul writes, “...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Please take this time, while you have it, to consider Jesus Christ and the sacrifice that He has made on your behalf. It will be gone in an instant, just like a vapor which is gone so quickly. Don’t hesitate to obey Him, remembering that your life is “but a vapor”. David Wheeler

## RESPECTFUL ATTIRE

Whether we like it or not, our clothes tell others how we view ourselves and what our priorities are in life. There is no separating our morals from how we act and dress (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

If we dress no differently for worship than we do for going to the park, we show how insignificant we view approaching God in worship. When the Jews lost respect for God it showed up in their worship. God asked them, “When you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? ...Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” (Mal. 1:8).

His point was obvious. Their sacrifices not only violated the Law (Deut. 15:21), they were also of such poor quality that the Jews would not offer them to their governor—when trying to impress him (Gen. 41:14). Certainly, God is asking the same of those who would not dress as sloppily or casually in meeting the president as they do in dressing for worship—when it is possible to dress more respectfully. (unknown)



# God's Plan of Salvation for all Mankind

Hear the Gospel Rom. 10:17

Believe Rom. 10:10; Gal. 3:26; Heb. 11:6

Repent of Sins Acts 2:38; 17:30

Confess Jesus as the Son of God Acts 8:27-39; Rom. 10:10

Be Baptized for Remission of Sins Mark 16:16; Acts 2:48; Rom. 6:4-6; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21

Live Faithfully *If you fulfill these commandments, you will be saved, and the Lord will add you to His Church (Acts 2:47). You'll be a Christian and are expected to serve God faithfully until death (Rev. 2:10)*

Your soul is important to us . If you would like to set up a study please contact us..

The Newton church of Christ

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Worship – 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study – 7:00 PM

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