



# The Plumbline

Assessing Current Teachings, Issues and Events with Scripture

## *Can the Bible Ever Mean What it Never Meant*

### *Abusing Old Testament Narratives to Promote False Teaching*

*This title is purposefully alarming in order to get the attention of the reader. Abuse is to take something by force that that is not yours for the taking. It is abuse when Scripture is mislabeled and misapplied. Violence is done to the message and meaning of scripture.*

Manfred Brauch describes it in this way:

*I very deliberately chose the term abuse to point to the serious nature of misreading the Bible. I am well aware that abuse conjures up terrible images... My use of the word is an intentional decision to drive home the point that abuse – in the sense of “doing violence to” - is precisely what happens when Scripture is misinterpreted and misused: violence is done to its message and meaning... I am particularly concerned about the abuse of Scripture within the tradition of the Christian faith that upholds the Bible as the unique Word of God and affirms its divine inspiration and authority. This tradition which is generally identified as evangelical and of which I consider myself a part... seeks to honor the text of Scripture, claiming it as the irreducible foundation of the faith “once delivered for all and entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3). Nevertheless, when on a regular basis, in our interpretation and application of the Bible, we grievously abuse Scripture, and we do violence to its message and meaning.” (Manfred T. Brauch, *Abusing Scripture*, IVF Academic, 2009, p. 15).*

James R. White in his book “*Pulpit Crimes*” highlights the transgression of mishandling the Scripture:

*“When the Bible is mishandled and sloppily proclaimed men's ideas replace God's truth. Reading into the text ideas and concepts that would have been foreign to the original writers and beyond their intention is called eisegesis rather than the appropriate activity of exegesis.” (White, *Pulpit Crimes, The Criminal Mishandling of Scripture, Solid Ground, 2006, p.55*).*

These two Greek prepositions tell the story, “*ex*” means “out of” and “*eis*” means “into.” Very simply *eisegesis* imports the reader’s personal meaning into the text and *exegesis* exports the author’s meaning from the text. Those who employ *eisegesis* must first import their ideas into the text and then suggest that these ideas actually come from the text. This is simply abusing the text.

James White states the obvious: “If you desire to bring a certain viewpoint into the scriptures, find ways to isolate any text and create a plausible way around it. There truly is no limitation to the imagination of the heart of man...” (White, *Pulpit crimes, page 101.*)

Just as there is no end to human imagination to spin historical events for the will of the spinner, so also the desire to find false meaning in a biblical text is only limited by the imagination of the reader.

## Hermeneutics

Typically only trained bible scholars commonly use this term. Actually hermeneutics is a transliteration of a Greek verb *hermeneuo*, which means simply to explain meaning. A form of the *hermeneuo* is used in Luke 24:27 which reads: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He (Jesus) explained (*hermeneuo*) to them what was said of Him in all the Scriptures.” Still for many, however, explaining what the Bible means seems daunting and difficult. However, people have been explaining things that people have written for thousands of years. Communication has been going on long before anyone ever took a course in biblical hermeneutics.

Robert Stein was a professor of mine in seminary. He gave his life to the study of hermeneutics and how to authentically understand the meaning of Scriptures.

Stein states:

“Now in all communication there must be present three basic components. There has to be an author, a text and a reader. Various people have argued for each of these three components to determine the meaning. Some argue for the author being the determiner of meaning, others for the text itself, and still others the reader.” (Robert Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible – Playing By The Rules*, Baker Academic: 1994, 2011)

### The debate of our day:

1. **Traditional View** (first half of the 20th century) – The approach to interpreting any literature, biblical or secular, was to assume that the author determines the meaning and the reader’s job is to find that meaning.
2. **More Recent Trend** (last half of the 20th century) – Critics now argue that the reader, not the author, is the one who determines the meaning.

**Affects on Biblical Interpretation** – Secular literary criticism has entered into the field of biblical interpretation. Biblical scholars wrestle with the question, what is the meaning? Some have concluded that meaning only applies as a reader interacts with the text – that it takes both the reader and the text to produce meaning. The author is no longer involved. The author has been removed from the equation. The reader now has the freedom to interpret the text any way he chooses. The author has control of the meaning only to the extent the reader allows.

**Authorial Intent** – This position stresses that the author determines the meaning. It holds that the author intends to convey a specific message/meaning through his writing. The goal then is to discern, as a reader, what was the original intent of the author. An illustration of Authorial Intent is to receive a love letter from a spouse/boy/girlfriend. Your desire is to read each line and discern/search for the exact meaning he or she intended. Conversely, a Reader Response position would be to find a love poem while walking in the woods and the author is not identified. You may not care what the author meant or intended and you have freedom to interpret it however you want. Your interpretive question would change to what does this mean to me. Key interpretive principle here is that the reader creates the meaning. But this is not playing by the rules of communication. We must seek to discover the meaning that has been placed there by the author. The author is the inspired bible writer directed by the Holy Spirit.

(John Bohannon, weccva.com, *Authorial Intent Versus Reader Response: Who Controls the Meaning?*)

Dr. Robert Stein quoted above was my professor in seminary in my doctoral studies. Below I will paraphrase from his class notes regarding the author's intent. Dr. Stein suggests that it is the author that ultimately determines the meaning of a text. I concur with Dr. Stein. He calls this "authorial intent." Let's follow Dr. Stein's reasoning. The prevailing current view is that the text and the reader control the meaning of a text. This suggests that the text alone is autonomous. It is as if there was never an author. It is as if a text comes to you dropped from heaven without any relationship in time and space to anything without any person being involved with it. The text is an end in itself. It is as if the text magically appeared without an author, without circumstances, without any particular time and space in view. The text has its own meaning period. It is the text and the reader that gives it meaning totally apart from who actually wrote it and why he wrote it. It's just the text there in front of us... If you are in a bible study and you are studying the book of Galatians and you come to a passage and if by some miracle the apostle Paul entered in the door and said to you, "What I meant by Galatians 3 here is. . . . This approach would say, "That is very interesting Paul, but it is irrelevant. Long ago you Paul lost control of this text. It is now a work of art. It is isolated. It has nothing to do with what you meant when you said it." Now according to this view if people come up with different meanings that are different from what it means for you—well . . . no problem! In that understanding, you the reader give the meaning to the text, and the text can apparently have multiple meanings. Therefore, there is no such thing as a single meaning of a text.

It is like watching clouds and someone says that a cloud looks to me like a dog and another looking at the same cloud says 'no it looks like a cow.' Well, actually you are both right. Each gives his own meaning according to how it is viewed. **But if a biblical text has many different meanings it actually doesn't mean any of them.** Unfortunately this is the common approach today. Haven't you been in a bible class and each person is asked what the text means to them and after everyone has had his say the study just moves on. But if we are to attain to the meaning God intended we must seek to understand what the actual author intended to say. Thus the meaning of Romans *is* what Paul meant when he wrote Romans. The Bible is not to be treated as some isolated form of art with each beholder able to have his own meaning. No it is a form of communication and we want to know what the author meant when he wrote it. Just as we are perturbed when someone reads into our words meaning we never intended, God I am sure is not impressed when we "edit his word." God's word was never intended to be treated as a work of modern art in which each viewer finds his own personal meaning in the painting.

The fatal flaw of any biblical explanation that ignores the author's meaning is that it loses the original meaning and thus loses the authority of God's inspired truth. If we simply read into the text our own meaning, the interpretation is severed from the divinely inspired author. The meaning then is personally derived and depends on the imagination of the reader.

"We must never apply a passage to ourselves before we have understood the original purpose of the original author. The Bible was never written to me – the Bible was written **for me**. When I read a passage in the Bible I must remember I am reading it over the shoulder of the person or group of people to whom the author originally wrote. It is only then that we can understand the inspired message and only then can we legitimately apply its principles to our own time."

(Sizer, Zion's Christian Soldiers, p. 21).

## Biblical Narrative

Biblical narrative is simply a historical record and its purpose is to give us a historical account. It simply does not follow that because God did something in the past (historical narrative) that He will do it again unless He so chooses. For example, God parted the Red Sea when the children of Israel were leaving Egypt and

drowned Pharaoh's armies. Are we to draw from this that every time God's children face a sea of water that God will part it? Likewise when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples was that a command for us to do the same? Paul mentions in passing that the Corinthians entertained the idea of "baptizing the dead" (1 Cor. 15:29). Are we to baptize the dead (something the Mormons routinely practice)? Because reluctantly Paul told of his journey to the third heaven, do we now have the same right and obligation as Paul? Does that simple historical reference of Paul's trip to the third heaven give proven false prophet Bob Jones the right to mystically take people on guided trips to the third heaven describing it in imaginary detail and referring to the demonic forces he encountered passing through the second heaven and etc, and then tell people all about it when Paul in his historical account says that he heard things that he was commanded not to be told to anyone? (2 Cor. 12:4).

Without doubt we must distinguish between historical narrative and teaching genres. Generally speaking normative doctrine is sourced from didactic (teaching) portions of Scripture. Conversely, historical narratives serve only to show us what happened to others in those historical events. Rick Watson gives two examples: First Moses and striking the rock twice (Ex. 17:6). Obviously, no one would suggest that Christians need to strike a rock twice to get water. Secondly, the apostle Peter apparently had a "shadow ministry" in that sick people were brought to the near proximity of Peter and his shadow healed them. Obviously we cannot institute a "water from rocks ministry," or the "shadow healing ministry."

(Rick Watson, sourced from *Coffee Time, on the net.*)

## Allegory

One of the most abusive methods of mishandling biblical narrative is to allegorize it. Allegory has unfortunately been imposed on scripture for centuries. Philo, a Greek trained Jewish writer, employed this tactic to help his Greek friends gain some meaning from the OT writings. In the early Christian centuries Origen used allegory extensively. In the early centuries after the NT there developed a school of Christian allegorists in Damascus who used allegory almost exclusively. In the middle ages until the Reformation it was simply expected that any passage of Scripture not only have a literal meaning but three other meanings as well. It was called the "*quadringa*" named after the four horses that pulled the chariots in the Roman horse races. But the Reformation dispensed with all this and restored the historical-grammatical approach to the biblical text. But in more recent times allegory has made a huge comeback. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. We must first define what allegory is. Just what is allegorical (also called mystical) interpretation? Roy Zuck offers the following description of biblical allegory:

"Allegorizing is searching for a hidden or secret meaning underlying but remote from and unrelated in reality to the more obvious meaning of a text. In other words the literal reading is a sort of code, which needs to be deciphered to determine the more significant and hidden meaning... The allegory [the hidden meaning] becomes the true meaning."

(Roy B. Zuck, Basic Bible Interpretation, Colorado Springs, Cook, 1991. p. 29).

It's as if the literal meaning of the text is an outer garment that must be removed to see the deeper and more glorious truth presented as an allegory. In this mystical quest the authority of Bible is compromised. With allegory the reader relies on his ingenuity and imagination to take various parts of the narrative and assign to them a meaning as a symbol.

Thankfully, the Reformation brought a return to the literal meaning of the text. Now there are allegories in the bible. Paul uses allegory in Galatians. **But** the bible writers could use allegory because they were the

biblical authors. But we the readers are not the Holy Spirit inspired biblical authors. If we allegorize we are abusing God's message. But now, centuries later, allegory is commonly employed. This return of biblical abuse goes without any challenge and the biblically illiterate wolf it down with glee.

## Just Two Examples of Current Biblical Allegory Abuse

Most current employment of allegory today is normally preceded by new revelations beyond Scripture. First there is a new revelation expressed, usually coming from one of the myriads of new prophets now traversing the globe. See Elijah's List on the net for thousands of these new prophetic revelations. These new revelations have nothing to do with Scripture for the author is not God but false prophets. But the false prophets in order to buttress their new imaginary extra-biblical revelations fraudulently use allegory to give the new revelation the appearance of biblical support. Actually the new revelations stem from the fleshly imaginations of the false prophets and then they follow up with suggested mystical meanings of scripture often from purely historical bible passages. Consequently this wedding of false revelation and allegory finds its source in the boundless imaginations of those promoting these new revelations.

### 1. The Latter-Rain Restoration Eschatology

The simple phrase "Latter-Rain" was abducted from Joel 2:23. In the historical context this reference to a "latter-rain" is simply the prophet Joel giving a historical reference to the "early" and "latter-rains" that were common to the agricultural year in Palestine. Notice that Joel refers to the early and latter rains as something that He (Jehovah) has already given to Israel. The passage states: "He has given the early rain for your vindication and He has poured down abundant rain, the early and latter rain as before". ... (Joel 2:23). Verse 27 attests that this giving of the early and latter rains had already been given to Israel and Joel is reminding the people of Israel of the goodness of the Lord already bestowed. But someone decided that this historical reference would make a nice allegory. In fact it could be pressed into service as a wholly new view of "salvation history" a new eschatology for the end of the age. The whole Latter-Rain allegory became very popular and widespread around the turn of the century and now has had a long history into our present time.

It is still with us today even though the term "Latter Rain" is not commonly still used. The Latter-Rain advocates allegorically teach that Acts 2 corresponds to or stands for the early rain mentioned in Joel. The long period of little or no rain in the Palestine weather pattern stands for the dark ages of medieval Christianity and the latter rain stands for an end-time out pouring and revival producing a end time harvest, just prior to the return of Christ. It is an ingenious picture conjured from a simple reference to the rainfall patterns and the agricultural year over two thousand years ago. But this allegory is totally unrelated to the intent of the biblical author but rather stems from the imagination of a bible reader over 2000 years removed. Joel never conceived of creating a new view of the work of the Holy Spirit from Pentecost to the return of Christ. Nevertheless, all current Dominion Eschatology is based finally on this fraudulent allegory of Latter Rain eschatology.

Any reference to a great end-time revival and the dominion of apostles and prophets finds its foundation in a passing reference to the ancient growing season in Palestine. It is allegory pure and simple yet it has spawned and continues to support a false view of the last days. Any reference to restored apostles and prophets and dominion teaching is based finally on the thin thread of an abusive imaginary allegory referenced from Joel's statement of the rainfall patterns of that day. This abuse of scripture then becomes a false justification of a supposed extra-biblical revelation. This is biblical abuse. We cannot just create our own meaning; rather we are limited to the meaning that was placed there by Joel the author to his readers of his day.

## 2. The Bridal Paradigm and Bridal Canopy Dominionism

Mike Bickle is not the first to employ allegory to the Song of Solomon. The medieval church early resorted to allegory in regard to the Song of Solomon. Bernard Clairvaux is representative. He read 1:13: "My beloved is to me a bag of myrrh that lies between my breasts." Clairvaux could not understand that this verse might mean exactly what it says, and so he allegorized it. The bag of myrrh stands for Jesus Christ crucified and the two breasts in the text represent the two criminals on either side of Jesus. Allegory searches for a hidden meaning that transcends the literal. Actually, the Song of Songs is a Jewish love poem (probably the 10th century BC) that extols sexual love between a man and woman united in marriage. It is God's endorsement of marital love as wholesome and pure. It was not Solomon's intent to allegorize it. Mike Bickle, a current Dominion Apostle, has intensified allegory from the Song of Solomon for his own Dominion purposes.

Cindy Jacobs and Dutch Sheets of the New Apostles and Prophets (NAR) have stretched even further the Song of Solomon allegory into Dominion territory in relation to the USA. Once again it is an amalgam of imagination prophetic revelation and allegory. In her vision Jacobs saw a line drawn from Washington State to Florida, a connection from the northwest to the southeast. She also saw a line from California to NY connecting the southwest with the northeast. Those lines intersected in Kansas in the form of X over our nation. Cindy knew the enemy had a plan to X out our nation and its destiny in Christ. But then enter Dutch Sheets another leading apostle/prophet, who enlarged Cindy Jacobs' vision. For Sheets the "X" somehow was transformed in a bridal canopy. The geographic center of the nation where the lines intersected became the center post of the bridal tent and canopy. This visionary bridal canopy or *hupah*, stretched across our nation as God tabernacled with His people. The bridal canopy is a Jewish marriage tradition supposedly harking back to the Song of Solomon. Jacobs' vision and Sheets enlargement of that vision into a prophetic bridal canopy over the USA became a Dominion revelation regarding America. The Bridegroom was covering his bride a covenant nation and pouring out His glory over America. Other false prophetic wannabes were further inspired to fill in the blanks of this prophetic vision based on the Song of Solomon.

Jolene Hamil became one of those prophetic enhancers. She and her husband Jon along with John Benefiel and other prophets proceeded to prepare the USA for the promised canopy of God's glory. Jon and Jolene apostolically are aligned with Apostle/Prophet Chuck Pierce and members of Wagner's Apostolic Council of Prophetic Elders (ACPE). They further resorted to allegorizing Hosea 2 claiming to have facilitated the divorcement of Baal (in America) and the resetting of America's covenant with Jesus across our nation. This effort culminated by presenting to the Lord a Declaration of Covenant on July 4, 11, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in DC. Then on 11-11-11 as part of the DC40 initiative, they returned to the Lincoln Memorial as leaders assembled in state capitals across our nation. From coast to coast they were reminded of God's covenant with America and they asked for His hand in marriage again... The Lord responded with YES. On the eve of 11-11-11, they gathered for the DC40 prayer time, Apostle John Benefiel (HAPN) had a vision. A thick, weighty substance began to form and connect from region to region. John realized he was seeing God's glory being restored [in our nation]... Later when praying into Cindy's vision the Holy Spirit supposedly ushered prophetess Jolene into a prophetic experience. She watched as (prophetically) tent pegs for this canopy were driven into the four corners of the nation. It is suggested that there is a correlation with the four corners and four winds of the Spirit, as portrayed in Ezekiel. Four winds, four corners." Jolene further allegorizes the Song of Solomon 3:6:

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness, like columns of smoke. Behold it is traveling couch (throne) of Solomon, sixty mighty men around it, the mighty men of Israel." The prophetess then gives us allegorical insight in to this passage:

“This picture from the Song of Songs portrays the romantic journey of the Bridegroom and his bride. They are moving together from the wilderness to the Promised Land...But note that in Solomon's procession, this traveling “bridal canopy (also a couch) was also the throne of governmental authority for all Israel... But Solomon had the wisdom to surround this tent (couch) of intimacy with 80 valiant warriors. That’s where you and I come in. Much like these men of valor, you are being invited to literally surround David's Tent DC in prayer... Together we can guard against the terrors of the night. As recent events have clearly shown, your prayers can directly affect the course of this initiative. In this critical hour (the election) let us work together to see a throne of worship established at our nations seat of authority. Let’s see God move to protect and defend our nation.”

( HAPN Forward, *Protect and Defend!prayer for David's Tent!, Lamplighter Ministries on August 16, 2012*).

An Oval altar (the ellipse on the White House lawn is elliptical) for an oval office. God wanted David's Tent DC to brood over His promises for new life and build a throne for His presence. Jon and Jolene further state” In Sept 2009 Seer Prophet Bob Jones was told an egg with new life would hatch in 2012. This was a move to the restoration of God's glory which Bob saw as a glory train. It is interesting that in Sept 2012 Jolene and I moved to an apartment in DC exactly across from Union Station. Why? The train of His glory is coming in. The Ellipse the sight of David’s Tent DC near the White House is an oval shaped park shaped like an egg. (Lamplighter Ministries).

As the election drew near Jolene said “We are now in the final 24 hours of David’s Tent DC. The egg of promise has most definitely hatched. The glory of the Lord is NOW being restored as a bridal canopy across the land. He is tabernacling with us.” (Lamplighter Ministries).

The ‘canopy vision’ could be aptly summarized with these words: “God loves me and Cindy Jacobs has a plan for my life.”

## **The Bridal Canopy Appears to Have Fallen Down.**

The presidential election (understood by these prophetic ideas) unfortunately went astray. An egg hatched alright and the tent pegs apparently didn't hold and the glory of the Lord is now heading to China. Chuck Pierce and Peter Wagner (now in the light of the Obama election) are calling for a new Antioch shift. Cindy Jacobs and other prophets had called 2012 as the tipping point etc, etc. But hastily it seems a redirection of the tipping point is tipping toward China. In terms of Jacobs’ vision/prophesy the effect of this election is that America has been *xed* out. Peter Wagner has now issued a new apostolic decree entitled “the America of Tomorrow, How shall we Pray.” Chuck Pierce said: “Now Peter [Wagner] I want you to hear this word... The Lord said the Antioch door is reopened in this place.... And the Lord said to you (Peter) 'open your eyes for I will now reveal to you what has come to closure and the new that will begin to be expressed... Pierce continues: “You Peter) are going to know what is really happening over us here. You’re going to understand how one church era is ending and a new church era is being established. You are going to break us out of our nationalism. . .You are going to reinstate the open door that first came to expression in Antioch, but has never come into its fullness. Lord! I loose this assignment. I feel angelically you are giving it from heaven.... We decree right now that the last great message and paradigm shift for this generation alignment will now be released in Peter in Jesus name.”

Peter Wagner later states: “How does this apply to what the Spirit is saying to the churches today... One involves our nation (America) and the other involves the church. The America of yesterday will not be the America of tomorrow. [This election] showed us there is no turning back. American culture for better or worse has changed forever... Some of us have been basking in what has been called American

exceptionalism. But I can imagine some of my Chinese friends might be considering Chinese exceptionalism.” For Peter Wagner the Lord has spoken, the new Antioch shift is to China.

Apparently the pegs weren't driven securely to the four corners of America and just one election destroys the effectiveness of all the divorcement of Baal declarations of the prophets. John Benefiel's vision is abrogated and David's Tent DC at the White House lawn was just a waste of time and resources. David's tent has fallen again. Wagner and Chuck Pierce think the canopy might now be forming over China, although Wagner sees it as far into the future. Jolene of USRPN and HAPN (affiliates of Wagner's NAR) informed us that “as they were resetting covenant with the Lord on 11-11-11 at the Lincoln Memorial, Chuck pierce and Dutch Sheets were in Kansas at the very place where the “X” intersected in Cindy's vision. At that time Chuck Pierce and Dutch felt a release to governmentally call for ‘God's glory to be restored as a biblical canopy over the land.’ But at that time they weren't thinking China. But now the prophets are calling it quits on their prophetic dominion allegory for the USA....

Doesn't all this seem silly? How can Christians get tied into knots like this? It's this sinking into the slough of continual contemporary imaginative revelations. And when it doesn't work out they just that quickly change prophetic gears, reinterpret their imaginations to mean an Antioch shift and redirect the glory to China. The whole NAR dominion thing is simply continual imaginative (from their own imagination) prophecy that is then linked allegorically to scripture. What does the historical biblical account of Antioch have to do with America and China today, especially when a few days ago it was linked to the American forefathers and resetting a supposed covenant with America. Was Luke the author of Luke/Acts thinking China of the 21st century when he wrote in the first century? Isn't this pure abuse of scripture? This is false prophecy and then a lame attempt to link it to Antioch and the book of Acts. This is pure spiritual and biblical abuse and misconduct.

## Conclusion

Indeed! Scripture can never mean what it never meant. Thanks to Eric Douma for the title of this article. James R. White asserts: “The Christian doctrine of inspiration sets the scriptures apart from other claimed divine revelations in that Christians believe the Scriptures are God-breathed. This means the written word communicates to be infallibly the very speaking of God in a miraculously personal manner (Matt. 22:31. The authority of the Word is not based upon the interpreter but upon the inspired [author]. The message of the written Word is the same through the course of time. Without this affirmation, the Word becomes a purely subjective document, incapable of communicating divine truth with certainty.”

(James White vs. Harold Camping On Iron Sharpens Iron! July 20, 2009).

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