

Myth Busters

Various dictionaries define ‘eisegesis’ as a personal interpretation of a Bible text using ones own ideas or bias. The following are the most commonly misused Scriptures in modern times. The two questions that solve most of the errors in the interpretation of these Scriptures are: *What is the larger context?* and *Who is the passage speaking to?*

2 Peter 3:9

‘The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance’.

The common misconception is that this refers to *all* and *every* person. However, if the reader carefully reads this *in context* and then asks the question: ‘WHO is this speaking to’, the CONTEXT of the passage might surprise.

‘This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2 That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior: 3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. 7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering TO USWARD, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance’.

This Epistle is specifically written to the ‘beloved’: ‘beloved, I now write unto you’ (vs.1)...‘beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing...’ (vs.8)...‘Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless’ (vs.14)...‘You therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things before...’ (vs.17)...

The primary context is about the end of this age and the sureness of the Lord’s coming for his ‘beloved’. It is a clear exhortation to the ‘beloved’ to be patient and not to listen to the false teachers (see previous verses) who were scoffing at the promise of the coming. The rules of grammar and Greek show that the ‘any’ and the ‘all’ cannot refer to any other pronoun but to the ‘us’ previous (the ‘beloved’).

Matthew Henry says of 2Pet.3:9 ‘What men count slackness, is long-suffering, and that to us-ward; it is giving more time to his own people, to advance in knowledge and holiness, and in the exercise of faith and patience, to abound in good works, doing and suffering what they are called to, that they may bring glory to God...’

Verse 9 is too often quoted to teach that God does not want *any human to perish*. Regardless of whether this premise is true or false, *this particular Scripture* (vs.9) is simply not speaking to or about unsaved men but to the ‘*us-ward*’ - the already saved who are called the ‘*beloved*’ several times (vs.1,8,14,17).

This scripture is in fact promoting the *preservation of the saints in Christ and the sureness of His coming!* The context is, and historically has always been, to *believers* - those who would be saved and come to repentance at some point in time. (The Greek (aorist) tense of ‘*all should come to repentance*’ is a snapshot of something that has or will happen. The ‘*all*’ are the ‘*beloved*’ or ‘*us*’).

Joshua 24:15

‘*Choose you this day whom you will serve*’ (vs.15) is often used by evangelists and modern day writers to show that we in an *unsaved* state must ‘choose’ of our ‘free will’ to accept the Lord in salvation.

However, read the passage in context and ask the questions: *WHO is the passage speaking to* and *what is the CONTEXT?*:

‘*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. 16 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; our fathers served.’*

The passage is actually about Joshua addressing *God’s people, Israel*, urging *them* to serve God only and turn from *idolatry*. Israel was already God’s ‘*elect*’ (Isaiah 45:4; Deuteronomy 7:6-8; 10:15; Psalm 135:4; Leviticus 20:23; 1 Peter 2:9).

The subject is not salvation but *idolatry!*

Revelation 3:20

‘*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*’

Many tracts and Gospel presentations use this verse as speaking to the unsaved. But *WHO* was this speaking to? Was it to unsaved sinners? No! The words are specifically addressed to *Christians* and more specifically to a *church* at Laodicea that needed correction. This church would be no different to many churches today that need to hear God’s Word. If Christ came and spoke to such churches today why would we wrongly then use this verse and address it to the unsaved?

Revelation 3:5

‘*He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*’

Many quote this Scripture to say that God can blot out names from the Book of Life; that one might lose his salvation; or that election/predestination is not settled as a *prior* decree. Firstly, the previous verses speak to *believers*: ‘*You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy*’ (vs.4).

Most importantly, some fail to read the little word **‘NOT’**. The passage is not saying God will blot out any name but actually the opposite!: **‘I will NOT blot out his name out of the book of life’**.

No doubt people can extrapolate the implication that God *could* ‘blot out’ names, but that is *not in the text!* All the text says is this: *The overcomers and those who are clothed in the righteousness of Christ will not have their names blotted out.*

Camels and ‘needles’

‘And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God’ (Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25).

Many readers may have heard the interpretation of this as being a literal camel going through a ‘gate’ in Jerusalem (the ‘needles eye’) and the camel having to kneel, have its baggage removed and with difficulty fit through a ‘gate’. It is a popular idea taught in some Judaistic groups and at times has been common in Charismatic/Pentecostal groups.

The idea is a myth. Would the architect forget to make a gate big enough for the camel and rider to pass through unhindered? There are no Biblical references to such a gate and no archaeological evidence of such.

The idea came originally from an 11th Century Greek Orthodox leader, Theophylact. No reference to any such idea is found in early years of church history.

The Greek word for **‘needle’** literally means *‘to sew’*. The passage clearly refers to a literal sewing needle and to a literal camel, *the largest native beast in Palestine at that time. The impossibility of a camel going through the eye of a needle was exactly what Jesus meant!* The passage clearly says it is impossible for people who trust in riches to enter heaven; and it is a miracle for a rich man to be saved. Jewish Talmudic literature also uses an aphorism about an elephant passing through the eye of a needle as a figure of speech *implying the impossible* as in Matthew 19:24. And that is precisely why the disciples immediately then asked: **‘Who then can be saved?’** (vs.25). Jesus then proved the *impossibility* further to show that in salvation - **‘with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible’** (vs.26).

1 Corinthians 14:4

‘He that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself...’

Many Christians in order to promote self edification by speaking in an unknown tongue, read or concentrate on *one half* of this verse and leave the rest of the verse out - **‘but he that prophesies edifies the church’**. Paul does not commend this **‘unknown tongue’** but rather *contrasts* it with something that edifies the church.

1 Corinthians 14 continually contrasts the singular **‘unknown tongue’** with **‘prophesies’** or with the plural **‘tongues’** (see vs.18,19). Paul *never* speaks in favour of the **‘unknown tongue’**. The **‘unknown tongue’** speaker might edify **‘himself’**, but the **‘prophesies’** edify **‘the church’**. The contrast cannot be avoided. 1 Corinthians 14 is *correcting* the church for this very problem - selfishness!

One can certainly edify oneself by various means. However, references to self edification in Scripture are *all negative!* *No gift is for self but rather for the body of Christ!* The gifts were given to **‘profit all’** in the body of believers (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Nowhere do the Scriptures promote self edification: *‘We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let everyone of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself...’* (Romans 15:1-2). We are to *‘edify one another’* (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

This *‘private tongues’* or *‘prayer language’* is an invention mostly from the second half of the 20th Century and popularised by men such as Oral Roberts and other Word-Faith teachers. It had the effect of making unknown tongue speaking more acceptable to mainline churches.

1 Corinthians 14:15

‘...I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also’

Some Christians use this verse to allow for the practice of speaking in an unknown tongue *without* interpretation. However, the words *‘and’* and *‘also’* absolutely refute such error. The word *‘also’* connects *both* *‘spirit’* and *‘understanding’* together. (The Greek word *‘understanding’* is *‘nous’*, literally in many places translated *‘mind’*). The command is to pray or sing *with understanding also* and at the *same time*. Paul’s main thesis in chapter 14 is his continual plea for *‘understanding’* (mentioned no less than 9 times, (vs.2,9,14,16,19; twice in vs.15 & 20). A similar word, *‘edification’*, is also mentioned 5 times, (vs.3,4,12,17,26).

The *‘spirit’* here is also *not the Holy Spirit but the human spirit*, (vs.14 *‘my spirit’*). Whatever *‘praying with the spirit’* and *‘singing with the spirit’* is, it must be done with *understanding* in the mind, *both to the speaker and any listener!*

Romans 8:26

‘Likewise also the Spirit helps our infirmities for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered’.

A new 20th century teaching is that the *‘groaning’* refers to speaking in an ‘unknown tongue’. However, the words *‘cannot be uttered’* refute the idea of anything being *spoken*, since ‘tongues’ are *‘uttered’* or verbalised.

Jesus died on a ‘Good Friday’?

It is impossible to get three days and three nights from Friday to Sunday morning. An understanding that there were *two Sabbaths* in the one week that Jesus died, expels this myth of a Friday crucifixion. In the feast of unleavened bread the first and last days of this feast were special Sabbaths regardless of what days they fell on (Luke 6:1). The normal weekly Sabbaths thus often fell in between these special Sabbath days. The Gospel of John alone explains that the Sabbath which began at sunset the day Christ was crucified *‘was a high day’* (John 19:31) and not an ordinary Sabbath which began Friday at sunset.

Most scholars believe Jesus was crucified on Wednesday or Thursday, depending on how the three days and three night periods are viewed, (ie. whether 24 hr. periods or not). The ‘Good Friday’ view seems to have come from Romish traditions.

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