

Whose interpretation is it? (Revisited)
By Wayne Vasilenko
(A Supplement to "Interpretation or Paradigm" By Dr. Joel Minto)

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Over the years, I have been involved in many discussions and debates. Because of those many debates, I have come to conclude that many people's opinions are often not really their own. Most people I have debated with simply parrot, or repeat what they have heard from others. This is especially true if the person debating has little or no first-hand knowledge of the subject that is being debated. Most people do not like to admit they that they are naive concerning some issues so they resort to simply repeating what they heard someone else say that agrees with the way they "feel" about the issue of the debate. We have to be very careful when we say we agree with someone unless we are very familiar with that person and what they believe...not to mention, why they believe what they believe.

I have been surprised many times when I quoted someone I had heard who sounded knowledgeable, only to find out that they ultimately took a position 180 degrees opposed to that which I had surmised based on other statements by that individual. This happened because I only heard what I wanted to hear, and I didn't take the time to learn more about the person to whom I was listening. I learned the hard way that sometimes someone else's opinion or belief can get me in trouble or at the very least cause me great embarrassment if I had not investigated for myself what their beliefs really were before quoting or indorsing something they had said. It is because so many people make the same mistake as I have, that over time, the truth about many issues can be severely distorted and sometimes lost completely. As a result, I have learned over the years that it is okay to say, "I don't know or I'm not sure." It is much better (and safer) to investigate issues for yourself, rather than to simply repeat what you have heard from someone else. Take the time to make your opinion - **Your opinion**, not someone else's.

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Opinions Can and Sometimes Do Change Over Time

As we grow in our Christian walk, we may find that over time, as we deepen our study of God’s Word; we begin to see that what we believed early on may not be totally accurate as far as a particular theology is concerned. Many of us fall “Victim” into taking things out of context or succumbing to the “Paradigms” Dr. Joel Minto talks about in his most recent article “Interpretation or Paradigm.” Most “newer” students of the Bible tend to get into the habit of pulling out verses of scripture and making them fit the way they believe things to be. Although I believe in keeping things in context and being mindful as to whom a particular verse of scripture is directed towards, I also believe that God can use the same verse of scripture to say different things to different people depending on their situation. I have personally experienced this many times over the years as a verse of scripture I have read before brings to light a truth totally unrelated to the strict context of the original meaning as relating to the original recipients of that particular verse.

Does this mean that the Bible says anything we want it to say? No... to me it says that God will reach out to us where we are with whatever means available at the time to bring us to the truth about our relationship to Him. As a supplement to Dr. Minto’s recommendations when studying scripture I would add three principles I learned from a Pastor many years ago; these apply especially to us in our daily devotions. When reading, ask yourself the following questions: What does it say, what does it mean, and what does it mean to me. As for the fact that opinions can change over time, I use the subject of Bible Prophecy as an illustration. Throughout the years Bible Prophecy has been a real attention getter, after all talking about the end of the world as we know it is bound to get anyone’s attention; but even this subject has undergone changes in opinions within the last hundred years. Despite the fact that Jesus specifically said the exact time of His second coming was known only to God the Father and Him alone, there have been many people over the years giving specific dates for such prophetic events.

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These dates have come and gone without fulfillment exposing many “False Prophets” and causing panic in many cases. Jesus told us of “Signs of the Times” which we could and would observe as prophesy unfolds. Some signs, although considered normal events to most observers only come to light when they are related to *the sequence of events*. I have mentioned some of these in recent articles, such as events pertaining to Israel. In order for some prophetic events to take place, they have to be preceded in many cases by other events. Dr. Minto also touched on this in his series about the Jewish Feasts. In conclusion I want to say that although we see many prophetic signs that Jesus mentioned unfolding in our time, not everything that happens is prophesy being fulfilled. Remember what Jesus said about “Wars and Rumors of Wars,” they happen... so does natural disasters and earthquakes. Although many; myself included, are observing a convergence of significant prophetic signs, the fact remains that no man or woman knows when the Trumpet will sound. We were told two basic things... watch for the signs, and **Be Ready!** Are you ready?