

149 Changing our minds IV – Reinterpretation

Question: *Is it ever right to reinterpret the Bible?* Well, it depends what you mean by reinterpret.

OED: “*Interpret*: Explain the meaning of (information or actions).”

For example, we might say, “Well, I know what you **said**, but what did you **mean** by that!”

OED: “*Reinterpret*: Interpret (something) in a new or different light.”

So my question becomes: Is it ever right to change our minds about the meaning of the Bible?

Well, that’s a bit radical, so how about: Is it ever right to change our minds about *some aspect of* the meaning of the Bible?

How do you feel about this? Do you fear that this time I might *really* be leading you off the rails?

So is it **ever** right to change our minds about the meaning of the Bible?

I’d say that it’s not only right, but it’s our Christian duty to be *willing* and *prepared* to reinterpret the Bible!

Think about my namesake again.^[148] He interpreted his (OT) Bible in one way. Then he met the risen Jesus Christ, which certainly gave him OED’s “new or different light”, and he totally changed his mind about the meaning of the (OT) Bible. This had world-altering consequences, as he became completely obsessed about Jesus and his love, and he was prepared to put up with any amount of persecution to promote this revolutionary new interpretation of the Scriptures.

OK, I’m not trying to be as revolutionary as Paul, but the article I was trying to write, before I bumped into Paul, was to remind you (which I will do anyway) of the conflict (deadly for some) that has come over the years where people have tried to reinterpret the Bible to challenge the received meaning. Issues have included:

- the sun goes around the earth, not vice versa
- Luther’s challenge, leading to the Reformation
- “slavery is perfectly acceptable”
- “Apartheid is based on biblical principles”
- “the Jews killed Jesus so...”

And more recently (possibly ongoing)

- creation/evolution¹
- “beating children is part of God’s way of discipline”
- “God gave us the Earth’s resources to use: ‘Subdue it’, God said.”

And I’m sure you could think of others.

¹ My appreciation of creation has been considerably enhanced by Walton’s *Lost World of Genesis One*.^[130–133]

I believe that, as part of God's plan to bring us all into better relationships with him and with each other, he is allowing more and more light to seep through into our minds in different ways over the centuries, and we need to trust God, be bold, and be willing to change our minds in the light of "new or different light".

But, historically, we have allowed our fear of reinterpretation to lead us into some of the most horrendous persecutions that you can imagine.

Watch this space.

Paul Bev. 16.07.21