

***Sabbath School Today***  
**With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

***How to Interpret Scripture***  
**Lesson 6: Why Is Interpretation Needed?**

**“Interpretation”**

To interpret means to explain what is unintelligible,—to put that which is vague and mysterious into plain language.

**The Bible Plain.** But the Bible does not stand in need of this. It is simple and plain to those who are simple enough to believe just what it says, without trying to make it fit their ideas.

**Light.** David said, “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). A light is for the purpose of making other things clear; but a light which could not be seen without the aid of another light, would not be much of a light.

**All Light.** Even the most difficult portions of the Bible are for the purpose of giving light. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19). “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25).

**The Difficulty.** How is it, then, that people find such difficulty in understanding the Bible? It is because there is a settled conviction in the minds of most people that the Bible does not mean what it says. Accordingly people will go everywhere except to the Bible, to find out the meaning of the Bible. They get from some source or other an idea of what the Bible means, and then try to fit the language of the Bible to that idea. This makes necessary a “system of interpretation;” and as different classes of people have different ideas, so there are different systems of interpretation, and all tend to obscure the light.

**Teachers.** Is there, then, no need of teachers? Indeed there is. The gift of teaching is third in order of the gifts of Christ, and is above the gift of working miracles. See 1 Corinthians 12:28. But remember that it is a gift of the Spirit. Teaching the Bible properly does not consist in “interpreting” it by human wisdom, but in “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:12, 13), by the aid of the Spirit, whose office it is to guide into all truth (John 16:13).

**Example of Christ.** Jesus, the great Teacher, who was anointed with the Holy Spirit for the purpose of preaching the Gospel to the poor, occupied His time in directing the

minds of the people to the Word. They could not understand it because they had glossed it over so much with human speculation and tradition. See Matthew 15:3, 6-9; John 5:46, 47.

**The Walk to Emmaus.** When He walked with the two disciples to Emmaus, “He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). That is, as they had been slow of heart to believe, He set the Scriptures so plainly before them that they could not help seeing them as they were, and, referring to the matter, they said, “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” (verse 32).

**The Opened Word.** That is what is wanted. Let the Scriptures be opened. “The opening of Thy words giveth light” (Psalm 119:130). For they themselves are light. “It giveth understanding to the simple.” What is necessary is that we should consider what the Lord says, and He will give us “understanding in all things” (2 Tim. 2:7).

**Rest on the Word.** Before the crucifixion Jesus had told the disciples these things. He had spoken plainly of His coming decease. But the difficulty was that they did not listen to what He said. Their thoughts were on their own plans, their own ideas as to how it ought to be, and notwithstanding the plainest statements, they did not hear what He told them. Now, when the Lord had been removed from their sight, and they failed to recognise Him on the walk to Emmaus, He directed their minds to the Word, and they saw what they could not see before because they listened to it without preconceived opinions and plans of their own. It is evident that “their eyes were holden that they should not know Him” in order that their faith might rest on the Scriptures alone, and that having found Christ and His life in the Word their faith might stand when His visible presence was removed from them.

—Ellet J. Waggoner, one of the 1888 “messengers”  
*The Present Truth*, vol. 11, no. 38, (Sept. 19, 1895), pp. 593, 594.

**Notes:**

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvgzZooyJZw>

Many of Pastor Penno’s sermons are on YouTube in Spanish. Just type **pastor paul penno en español** in the search bar.

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