

# Fallacies most Bible students make

## In Interpreting scripture

by Hershel Lee Harvell Jr

About Copyright: If you feel this book helps  
in your study, then use it and be blessed by it.  
If you feel you need to quote from it,  
then be blessed in it.

[www.reformedontheweb.com](http://www.reformedontheweb.com)

There are many fallacies made today in the interpretation of scripture. Some of the different fallacies made include: historical fallacies, word study fallacies, presuppositional fallacies, logical fallacies, grammatical fallacies, etc.....

We will discuss a few of these.

## The Evidence Fallacy

One fallacy most make when coming to the scriptures is that most who do not accept the text for what it states, fails to recognize the *prima facie* evidence.

You ask, "What is *prima facie* evidence?"

*Prima facie* evidence is evidence that is sufficient to raise a presumption of fact or to establish the fact in question, unless evidence of equal veracity is presented in rebuttal. Included in this evidential system is the presumption of innocence until proven guilty and that witnesses must present facts, not opinions. In the area of biblical studies this evidential methodology stands in opposition to the hermeneutics of doubt (or, the Troelschian principle of skeptical criticism).

For example when we read about the Chaldeans in Gen. 11:28-31 we should not doubt the reliability of the text of scripture just because the extra-biblical records do not mention them until the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The Assyrian records that Archaeologist have found do not mention the Egyptian Pharaohs from the time of Abraham until Moses, yet no one doubts that the record of the Egyptians is not accurate.

So we must recognize the evidence of the Biblical text as being accurate, unless evidence of equal credibility could be presented against it. For example: many believe that there are many contradictions in the mention of numbers in the Biblical text and there may be in certain places, but when we read in Psalm 60 that Joab slew 12,000 Edomites we ought to receive that as *prima facie* evidence. If we were to read 2 Samuel 8:13 it would read that David slew 18,000 Arameans and in 1 Chronicles 18:12 it would read that Abishai slew 18,000 Edomites.

Are these three different accounts or are they three accounts of the same events? This is the same event. The Edomites and Arameans got together to wage war on David and his men. It could be said of David as King that he slew 18,000 Arameans. Just as it could be said of Joab the Captain of the Army that he slew 12,000 Edomites or Abishai as the next in command, it could be said that he slew 18,000 Arameans. The difference of numbers between Joab and David and Abishai could be easily resolved by the fact that the 12,000 might have been killed in one battle, while 18,000 were killed in the whole war.

So we need to accept what the Bible says. To look for secondary evidence to prove that the Bible is true or to prove that an event occurred in the Bible is to demean the accuracy and authority of scripture.

### The Word Study Fallacy

Some today end up falling into many errors because of today's method of exegesis. Many resort to word studies throughout the entire Bible in order to try to understand the text more accurately. This leads to extrapolations or reading into the text something that is not intended by the author of it.

I am not saying that the interpreter of scripture shouldn't try to understand why a Biblical writer used a certain word compared to another word that could have had a similar meaning. We must recognize that there could have been several different words that the author could have chosen from and yet he still chose that particular word by the leading of the Spirit.

Yet we must also recognize that we learn more about the wages of sin being death than we would if a word study was done on "wages", "sin", or "death." In other words each particular word of a sentence in the scripture doesn't mean much until it is placed in a sentence and interpreted in the context of the whole. Thus when Christ said, "I give to my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish....." means a whole lot more in that context, than it would if I separated each word and tried to understand them by themselves.

### The Presuppositional or Logical Fallacy

There is much revealed in scripture to keep us busy without reading between the lines or making up doctrines that do not exist. For instance, many will take scripture out of context and apply it to any and everything. One such scripture is Philippians 4:13 which states: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." They will apply this scripture to taking an exam in history class tomorrow or to being able to do a particular job. The student taking an exam should not substitute studying with quoting this scripture nor am I a doctor and can't perform any type of surgery.

Another form of this fallacy is building doctrines that do not exist. Many think that Christ went into Hell when he died and preached to the departed spirits of the Old Testament saints because the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, so they had to go into a good or paradise compartment until Christ could deliver them. This is not true. There is no Protestant purgatory. This comes from Roman Catholicism and if all scriptures were

examined that many use to prove this, one would see that there is no such doctrine in the Word of God. When Elijah was taken to heaven, he went straight up and even the prophets of his day aggravated Elisha, until he put out a search for him, least he had been thrown from heaven into the wilderness. Moses also was seen with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. No, there is no such thing as purgatory and all saints from Abel on went to heaven.

Another doctrine that is propagated today is that healing is in the atonement. They use 1 Peter 2:24-25 to build a doctrine on this viewpoint. They say that Christ was scourged for our healing. No Gospel writer lays any emphasis upon what happened to Christ before the cross. It is his death on the cross that is significant. One commentator stated that there are 37 sicknesses and diseases in the Bible and that Jesus was scourged for these. The Bible never ever states this. Even in 1 Peter where it states that by his stripes we are healed, the word "stripes" in the Greek is singular and is "stripe." It is the stripe of the cross that reconciled us to God.

Let's read this:

1 Peter 2:24-25 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed; For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

God's Word Bible has a clearer translation:

1 Peter 2:24-25

Christ carried our sins in his body on the cross so that freed from our sins, we could live a life that has God's approval. His wounds have healed you. You were like lost sheep. Now you have come back to the shepherd and bishop of your lives.

Now am I saying that there is no healing in God, absolutely not? God can heal if he so pleases. But no where does it say that healing is in the atonement.

Jesus was delivered for our sins.

Romans 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

Hebrews 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

And here is the very scripture used to prove healing in the cross.

1 Peter 2:24-25 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed; For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Let's place both interpretations into this text, the false one and the correct one.

First the false one:

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye body is healed; For ye were as sheep going astray; but now by the healing of your body, you have returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Now let's read it with the correct interpretation: The original Greek has "stripe" instead of stripes and we will read it as such.

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose "stripe" ye are healed; For ye were as sheep going astray; but now by the healing of your soul , you have returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

There are a few commentators of today that hold to the healing of the body here and not to the healing of the soul, but this is because they have come to the text with a presupposition or presupposing it to state this.

Both Thomas Nelson and the Jameson Fausset and Brown commentary stated that the original Greek says "stripe" singular.

Commentaries who rightly interpret this scripture are: The Thomas Nelson Study Bible, Jameson Fausset and Brown The Pulpit commentaries, John Calvin, Matthew Henry, Albert Barnes, Adam Clarke, John Wesley, The Bible Background commentary, The Thompson Chain Study Bible, The Dutch Annotated Bible of 1657, The Reformation Study Bible, etc.....

Sickness is the result of sin. God had to atone for the sin problem, so that ultimately the sickness problem could be done away with. Yet because we still have sin dwelling in us, then sickness can over take us and eventually death. If we could stop the sickness just by faith, then death could be defeated to on these grounds.

There are many other fallacies that I could have gone into, but time will not permit. So I

will end with this.

Always study. Even after you have reached a conclusion go back and see what men throughout the history of the church have stated. Be diligent. Don't just accept or cling to the first interpretation that you hear. You might be taking the scripture out of context.

This is an abuse of today's church in general. No one wants to study and see if the text actually states what they are trying to force upon it.

If you were to ask me if our theological errors were sin, I would answer absolutely. So whatever one holds to, they will give an account of before the throne of God.