



BIBLICAL FOOTPRINT 7 —

No Private Interpretation

2Peter 1:20 makes it abundantly clear that the Bible and its contents are not subject to any private interpretation. “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” What does that mean? Of primary importance, in its literal sense, it means that those who wrote the Bible never, ever, wrote their own opinion, or substituted their thoughts for God’s thoughts, or their words for God’s. They never put any manner of personal twist on what God said. Of equal importance is the fact that since God said it, then there is only one interpretation to what God said, and that is His interpretation. No one thinks like God, let alone can perceive His thoughts. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” **Isaiah 55:8, 9.**

In addition, the Bible says, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” **Isaiah 8:16, 20.** God says that His Word, and thus most especially the prophecies, are inspired, or God-breathed. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Lastly, God has set forth a principle that He has established as to what can be relied upon to establish a matter. That requirement is two or three witnesses. This principle was first set forth by God to Moses in **Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15.** Those verses state:—

“At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.” “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”

Jesus affirmed this principle in **Matthew 18:15, 16** where He says, “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”

Likewise, Paul states in **2Corinthians 13:1**: “This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.”

Thus, the Bible is a witness unto itself for it contains the witness of God necessary to establish itself as reliable and the only true source for interpretation. Likewise, any doctrine, position, lesson, or application of Scripture ascribed to by this body of believers relies on the Bible—and the Bible only—as its foundation of faith. The platform of truth established by the pioneers did exactly that; under the inspiration of God brought forth the present truth for today; and serves as a witness to the truths they were espousing. For example, there is much debate on the **books of Daniel and Revelation** in the Bible. In particular, **Daniel 11:36-45. Revelation chapter 11, beginning at verse 3**, is the witness of **Daniel 11:36-39**; and **Revelation 16:12** provides a witness **to verses 40-45 of Daniel 11**. In addition, the historical record provides numerous witnesses as to who and what these verses are referring to. Of even greater importance, the pioneers joined together as brethren, expounding the reality that the time of the Reign of Terror in France, which declared God dead and abolished all established religions, was the kingdom **described in verses 36-39 of chapter 11 of the book of Daniel**; and Napoleon Bonaparte, whose actions ended the Reign of Terror, was the primary instigator **in verse 40**. The kings of the north and south have always been—since their founding after the death of Alexander the Great—Egypt and Turkey with their respective possessions (Turkey at one time including the territory of the king of the west and the king of the east). The titles are based on territory and who controls it, not persons or actual kings. This truth was established and promulgated by men such as A. T. Jones, Uriah Smith, E. J. Waggoner, S. N. Haskell, A. G. Daniells and others. Thus the Word of truth has been established and woe to any person who thinks himself wiser than God and His Word to give any interpretation of the Scriptures other than what has already been established and confirmed by numerous witnesses.

“But let us read further as to what the Bible claims for itself. Take the following texts:—

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.”
Hebrews 1:1, 2.

"No prophecy of Scripture is a private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." **2Peter 1:20, 21, R.V.**

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." **2Timothy 3:16.**

"And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." **Acts 3: 20, 21.**

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." **1Thessalonians 2:13.**

"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of God." **1Corinthians 14:37.**

"Many more texts might be added, but these are sufficient. They show plainly that the Bible claims to be the word of God. It is not that it contains the word of God, but it **is** the word of God. In the words of the Bible, the Holy Spirit testifies. See **Hebrews 10:15, 16; 1Corinthians 2:13.** It was the Spirit of Christ that was speaking through the prophets. This is what the Bible claims, and there are many who know of a surety that it is true. They are not Bible critics, however, but Bible believers. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." **John 7:17.** "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." **Psalms 25:14.**

"From the texts that have been quoted it is evident that whoever brings a charge against the Bible is bringing a charge against God. To say that the Bible is fallible, is to say that God and Christ and the Holy Spirit are fallible. For if the word of God be not infallible, then God is not infallible. But God is infallible, and so is His word. "As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried; He is a buckler to all those who trust in Him." **Psalms 18:30.** "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." **Psalms 12:6.** "For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven." **Psalms 119:89.** Jesus said to the Jews, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not His writings, how shall ye believe My words?" **John 5:46, 47.** And so it is that in rejecting the Bible, either as a whole or in part, men not only are in danger of rejecting Christ, but are actually rejecting Him. We write for the purpose of warning honest souls who may be

confused by the show of learning made by Bible critics. Let them remember that "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." **Job 28:28**. "A good understanding have all they that do His commandments." **Psalms 111:10**. When people who decry the Bible profess to believe in an infallible Christ, it is enough to ask them how they can know anything about Him, if it is not from His word, which they treat so lightly.

"But some will say, 'Even though we admit the Bible to be infallible, every man's opinion and interpretation thereof is not infallible.' Very true. We go further, and say that no man's opinion or interpretation of the Bible is infallible. Further still, we will say that there is not a man on earth, whose opinion or interpretation of the Bible is worth any more than the paper on which it is written. It is not what men think about the Lord but what the Lord thinks about men that we are concerned with. The Bible is not to be interpreted, but read, studied, and believed. The most learned man in the Scriptures can do no more than to lead others to the place whence he derived his knowledge and let them drink from the same fountain for themselves.

"There are in the Bible many 'deep things,' and 'things hard to be understood.' But God is His own interpreter. And He will make it plain."

*"He gives the Holy Spirit freely to everyone who will receive it, as a Guide into all truth. **John 16:13**. The Spirit makes known to us the things that are freely given to us of God, 'for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God.' **1Corinthians 2:10**. Learning is not to be despised, but rather desired; but the humblest person who truly fears God, may understand the Bible far better than the most learned Doctor who trusts in his own wisdom. The truth of God is hidden from the wise and prudent,—wise in their own wisdom,—and is revealed unto babes, who are willing to receive the wisdom that comes from God." **E. J. Waggoner, Present Truth, UK November 2, 1893***

Thus, the Bible will, with due diligence and study, interpret itself. If God used symbols of some sort to represent something, He will also provide the meaning of the symbol. For example, in the Old Testament, **in the book of Daniel, chapter 2**, God gave King Nebuchadnezzar a vision of a statue with a gold head, silver chest, bronze thighs, iron legs and clay and iron mixed together in the feet and toes. God gave Daniel the interpretation of those symbols, which he then presented to the king with the king being the head of gold, and each of the other kingdoms that were to follow represented a different part of the rest of the statue the king saw. Now in this chapter, God did not identify any of the other kingdoms

except Babylon. But **in chapter seven of the same book**, Daniel received another vision mimicking the one **in chapter 2** given to the king, only this time using strange looking animals for the symbols. Once again, when the angel gave Daniel its interpretation, he was told that these animals were kingdoms which were to follow. Then, **in chapter eight**, Daniel receives another vision. In this one, the first two animals were identified as the kingdoms of Medo-Persia, and Greece, and so by research and due diligence, we now know who the first three kingdoms are **in chapters two and seven**. The last—Rome, both pagan and papal—is plainly identified by the evidence presented.

Another example is found **in Revelation** where John was reporting **in chapter 13, verse 1**, that a beast was to arise from the sea, or a great body of water. The sea, or water is later explained by God through the angel to mean peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues. **Revelation 17:15**. The beast is composed of the various parts of the animals which Daniel saw **in Chapter 7 of his book** thus linking Daniel and Revelation as companion texts and witnesses. The Bible says in **Amos 3:7**: “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.” So the Bible, God’s Word, is not in any need of any private interpretation, and the efforts of some in this direction have so distorted the truth of God’s word that confusion instead of reason rules in the minds of men, allowing Satan to lead them away from the truth of God’s word.

*“Guessing at the meaning of prophetic symbols, and trying to imagine a hidden meaning for every incidental allusion in a parable, and then putting forth such conjectures and vain imaginings with as much confidence as though they were matters of special revelation, are among the most pernicious things that are done under the head of Scripture exposition. Nobody has any right to declare anything from the Bible, which he cannot prove by the Bible. ‘No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.’ What any man believes or thinks about a given passage is not worth the paper on which it is written, no matter how learned and pious the man may be, if he cannot present Bible authority for his position. There is no man on earth that is to be taken as an authority on any matter of doctrine. There is no authority but the Bible.” E. J. Waggoner, **Signs of the Times, May 25, 1888.***

*“Prophecy is light proceeding directly from God, who is Himself light. With Him there is ‘no darkness at all.’ **1John 1:5**. In Heaven, where the will of God is done perfectly, all is light. In the New Jerusalem, the inhabitants ‘need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light.’ **Revelation 22:5**. And when the will of God shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven, the whole earth will be lightened by the glory of God. ‘The nations*

of them who are saved shall walk in the light' that comes from the city of God. **Revelation 21:23, 24.** But sin has separated man from God, so that darkness now covers the earth. The prophecy comes as a beacon-light to guide men to the source of light. As with the rays from a distant light-house, the prophetic light may at first be comparatively faint; but the nearer we approach to the source of light, the brighter the light will become; and so of those who take heed to it, it may truly be said that their path is 'as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' **Proverbs 4:18.**

"No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.' **This means that Scripture is its own interpreter. For every prophecy contained in the Bible, the key is found there also and therefore every prophecy is of public interpretation—the interpretation is just as free to one person as it is to another.** Whenever a man puts forth any view as an explanation of a given prophecy, the humblest person has a right to challenge his exposition, no matter how learned he may be. If he cannot produce positive Scripture authority for his interpretation, it must be rejected, or at least held in suspense until some wiser person can find a Bible reason for the theory. The Peshito Syriac version renders the verse thus: 'No prophecy is an exposition of its own text.' The idea is the same as that expressed above. No man can read a prophecy and tell by his own unaided power, from the reading of it, what it means. He must look for an exposition to some other passage, possibly in the same chapter (**as in Daniel 7**), but still separate from the prophecy itself. Spiritual things must be compared with spiritual." **E. J. Waggoner, Signs of the Times, November 9, 1888**

"To many people the word 'prophecy' conveys the idea of something obscure and incomprehensible. The prophetic portions of the Bible they take but little pleasure in reading. Very often they think that one who undertakes to explain the prophecies is presumptuously meddling with things that belong only to God. The prophecies, they say, may be understood when they are fulfilled and not before.

"This is not as it should be; and it would not be so if in time past man had not dealt presumptuously with the prophecies, giving mere human speculation for exposition, when God has said that 'no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,' and so have put darkness for light. For the prophecy, instead of being something obscure, is a light. Prophecy is something foretold; it is history in advance. God, who sees the end from the beginning, and who 'callesth those things that be not as though they were,' is

able to write the history of an event before it occurs far more exactly than any human pen can write it afterward. Now if we can understand history when written by men, why should it be thought a thing impossible that we should understand the history when written in advance by the Spirit of God?

“The answer will doubtless be that there are so many symbols used, so many things that cannot be understood literally, that one can never be sure that he has the correct interpretation. But this again is a mistake. There are symbols, it is true. But the Bible itself furnishes an explanation of all these symbols, and by substituting these explanations for the symbols, the prophecy may be read literally. Symbols are used in our common conversation, yet we have no difficulty in understanding one another, because we understand what these figures of speech mean. In like manner, when we accept the Bible explanation of prophetic symbols, we need have no difficulty in understanding the prophecies. By applying these explanations to the symbols in the prophecies already fulfilled, we prove their correctness; and by studying the prophecies that are already fulfilled, we are assured that those that still remain will be as exactly fulfilled. Thus the prophecy becomes the grand proof of the inspiration of the Bible. If we throw aside the prophecy, we cannot demonstrate that the Bible is the inspired word of God.” **E. J. Waggoner, *Prophetic Lights*, pg. 5 (1889)**

Equally important is that God has provided the believer with the means of interpreting His Word, not just from the Bible itself, but by His representative, the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of Prophecy, Who inspired every word of the Bible to be written, and Who is foretold by Jesus that He is (1) the Spirit of Truth — **John 16:13**; (2) He will guide us into all truth — **John 16:13**; (3) He will teach us all things — **John 14:26; 1Corinthians 2:13**; (4) He will bring all things to our remembrance; **John 14:26**; (5) He will show us things to come — **John 16:13**; (6) He is the witness of God to us as to His Word, His promises, His covenant — **Hebrews 10:15; Romans 8:16; 1John 5:6**.

“It is not that prophecy has some deep, hidden, mysterious meaning that so many fail to understand it. The apostle Peter has said of it, ‘Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’ It is plainly implied from this language that what is essential to an understanding of prophecy is the reception of that spirit which spake through the prophets. Of that spirit, promised to all who seek it, it is written, ‘He will guide you into all truth.’” **J. N. Loughborough, *Last Day Tokens*, pg. 9-10 (1904)**

“That which is committed to the church is the word of God. This, and this alone, is to be spoken. This we are to hear. The fact that a number of men are agreed on a certain point, is no evidence that the thing is true. In a matter of faith, one hundred men are as likely to be wrong as one man is; and they are all sure to be wrong if they say anything aside from the word of God. Therefore if ‘the church’ does not speak the word of God, it is no more to be listened to than is any individual.

“The ‘right of private interpretation’ is not involved in this question. It is not a matter of interpretation, but of loyalty to the plain word of God. For one man to accept an interpretation of Scripture simply because another man says that it is correct, is to accept that other man as pope; but for each man to set his own judgment and authority against everybody else, and to interpret Scripture according to his own judgment, is to make himself a pope, and that is no better. What then shall we do?—Accept the Holy Spirit, the divinely-appointed guide. The gift of the Holy Spirit is to every man, to guide him individually into all the truth, which is the pure word of God.” **E. J. Waggoner, Present Truth, UK January 17, 1895**