

ML108 Beware of Imported Quotes

This lesson focuses on a danger Bible students face when working with OT words that have been imported into NT texts. Let's begin with some basic considerations.

Most words in the OT are symbolic. This may not be clear to everyone because the scriptures hide symbols in plain sight. How? Symbols form parables that tell stories about the lives of the Patriots, the Laws of Moses, and the inspirations of the prophets.

You can study the OT on two levels; the historical level and the figurative level. You learn history via the former and you learn doctrine via the latter. To learn history, you read the script; to learn doctrine, you study the meanings of the symbols.

When imported into the New Testament, OT words that are not symbols [plain speech] mean what they say. Neither the OT nor the NT writers interpreted them, and neither should we. Interpretations of plain speech words contribute to false doctrines.

Old Testament symbols don't mean what they say. When imported into the NT, you must interpret each one. Failure to do this will contribute to false doctrine. This failure will also hide truths that God wants to reveal.

Import-1: OT Plain Speech

You should always interpret symbols but never plain speech. In the verse below, consider what would happen if you interpreted the word "virgin" as "a young woman." This one error would destroy the foundation of Christianity!

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us [Mt. 1:23].
[See Isa. 7:14.]

Unless corrected since the last time I saw it, the "New World Translation" does exactly this. The scripture reads "young woman" instead of "virgin."

Import-2: OT Symbols

Our next example is from the Book of Joel. He was a prophet to Judah, but his message focuses on the church age. The four stages of one kind of locust in Joel 1:4 parallel the first four of the seven church ages.

And, his warning concerning the "Day of the Lord" [Joel 1:15], which will begin immediately after the Rapture,

shows him seeing events to the end of this 7th church age. Also, his prophecy in Joel 2:8, a verse that Peter quoted in Acts 2:17, shows him seeing the first Day of Pentecost which began the 1st church age.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams [Acts 2:17]. [Imported from Joel 2:28.]

The underlined words are symbols; the rest of the text is plain speech. Joel didn't interpret these words when he wrote them, and neither did Peter after he quoted them.

In the OT and in the NT, if you don't interpret these words you might think that "old men" cannot see visions and that "young men" cannot dream dreams. So, let's see how Paul interpreted these words.

Paul taught that the "old man" is the carnal life of the physical body [Col. 3:9]; he taught that the young [new] man is the spiritual life of the physical body, growing in the image [life] and knowledge of Christ [Col. 3:10].

So then, both Joel and Peter teach that dreams should be part of every believer's life. Also, Job 33:14-28 provides instructions concerning dreams.

Import-3: Doctrines

Because the OT is the foundation of all NT doctrines, the NT imports many scriptures from the OT. Not always letter for letter; these imports are spiritual and doctrinal.

This connection between the OT and the NT enables us to confirm NT doctrines by comparing them with their OT counterparts. Space prevents extensive coverage of this subject, so let me present one doctrine that requires only a few words.

Moses introduced an altar of earth on which we offer burnt offerings [Ex. 20:24]. This is the same place where God records His name. You are this altar and these burnt offerings represent your prayers.

God puts His name on you during water baptism. Now, Christ is God manifest in the flesh and His name is Jesus. You only need to read three verses to confirm this truth [Acts 2:38, 8:16 and 10:48].