

The True Context and Grammar of Scripture  
Copyright, J. Michael Strawn

From John 10:1-21. THE TRUE CONTEXT and GRAMMAR OF SCRIPTURE, PART 1

#1. The Lord presented a "figure of speech" (v.6.) At its delivery, it was meaningless to everybody who heard it. They "did not understand what those things were" (v. 6.)

#2. Why did Jesus address them in what they thought to be incomprehensible language? The answer: So that He could explain it (v. 7.)

#3. In summary from verses 7-18: Jesus is the true Shepherd; His motive is love; all others are pretenders; The Good Shepherd alone saves; "I will lay down my life for the sheep" (v. 15); He will die and come to life again.

#4. Question: All of this was compressed into "the figure of speech." So how could the auditors have been able to comprehend it? Certainly no one could.

#5. The Lord's manner of teaching elicits the issue of what it means to "understand" the Word of God.

#6. The "figure of speech" was a string of words. But it was not open to human interpretive devices. The reason: Jesus Christ Himself is the context of, and the grammar for, the "figure of speech" or any other string of words! – and of course, the Bible for example.

#7. This chapter is remarkable. Almost all of the spectrum of people -- representing biblical scholarship to the casual reader of Scripture -- think time, history, culture, society, experience and human reason form the context of the Bible. John 10 puts that idea into the dust bin.

#8. To "understand" Scripture one must recognize and acknowledge the true context of, and the true grammar of, revelation.

This is not a method; it is a Person. it is the person of God. The Bible is not a book like all other books.

From John 10:1-21. THE TRUE CONTEXT and GRAMMAR OF SCRIPTURE, PART 2

#1. Logically, before he Lord put "the figure of speech" (v. 6) into evidence, there was (a) a purpose for it and (b) there was a fixed meaning attached to it.

#2. Question: Where was the locus of this purpose and fixed meaning? Answer: It was in the mind of Jesus (who is God).

#3. This means that the mind of God is the context of the word of God. Jesus' mind was the source of that string of words. By generalization, should that not apply to the whole of Scripture?

#4. The mind of God is the grammar (rules) for the achievement of its meaning. It is God who supplies the rules by which true understanding of the Word is possible.

#5. The force of these terms means that the Scriptures exist in a *supernatural textual condition*. It is not mere history. Effectively, then, the mind of the reader is assigned a place in all of this. It becomes the recipient of the meaning; it does not generate the meaning. As consequence, there is a difference between meaning and interpretation.

#6. Understanding will result as our language and behavior partake of this supernatural textual condition. The starting point for revelation is the Almighty Himself, and the starting point for reading it is its supernatural condition. Human reason is thus pushed downstream.

From John 10:1-21. THE TRUE CONTEXT and GRAMMAR OF SCRIPTURE, PART 3

#1. Jesus voiced "this figure of speech" (v. 6.) Notable in these verses is the fact that the Lord rendered one and only one meaning of the figure of speech (v. 7-18.) There are no multiple interpretations addressed in this text. They do not exist. They have no standing. Why not? Because every text has (a) a supernatural context and every text has a (b) supernatural grammar. The starting point of understanding is not human reason.

#2. Therefore, the Lord teaches the one resulting determined meaning. The Scripture means only what God says that it means. The reader is not in authority in the realm of biblical truth.

#3. The supernatural condition of every text verifies the one determined meaning.

#4. At this point, understanding "appears" in the mind of the reader.

#5. Every text has this function: It is to produce revealed understanding.

#6. Hermeneutics (called the science of interpretation) produces various and not always congenial interpretations. Revealed meaning is beyond its parameters.

#7. Jesus "received" this one biblical meaning as a "commandment" "from My Father" (v. 18.) Understanding carries the weight of "commandment."

#8. True biblical meaning conduces, however, to "division" (v. 19.)

From John 10:1-21. THE TRUE CONTEXT AND GRAMMAR OF SCRIPTURE, PART 4

- #1. The reader has no authority in the presence of revelation from God.
- #2. The principal relation prescribed by this text is the relation between leadership and disciple. "Postmodern reader response" schemes where personal or ideological meanings are mapped onto Scripture are ruled out. As readers, we are not permitted to "construct" the meaning of the Bible.
- #3. This scripture connects supreme authority to the shepherd. It is the true "shepherd of the sheep" (v. 2) who determines their destiny. And eternal destiny is determined in this world.
- #4. Jesus is "the door of the sheep" (v. 7, 9.) The Lord determines the experience of the sheep. "I am the door; if anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (v. 9.)
- #5. The relation between "the Good Shepherd" (v. 11) and "the sheep" is founded on the relation between Jesus and "the Father." "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep" (v. 14,15.)
- #6. All this is pursuant to The Lord's driving purpose -- shall we call it the big "fold"? (v. 16) One flock of all men, Jews and Gentiles, founded on revealed meaning and on the understanding of it!

From John 10:1-21. THE TRUE CONTEXT and GRAMMAR OF SCRIPTURE, PART 5

- #1. Jesus spoke of the "thief" (v. 1,) "a stranger" (v. 5,) "robbers" (v. 8), "a hired hand" (v. 12.) These terms are symbols that represent those who stand in opposition to the true context and to the true grammar of Scripture.
- #2. These people want to displace the supernatural leadership of Christ (v. 4.) In its stead, they propose themselves and their limited human wisdom. Their leadership is devoid of the supernatural (v. 10.) These are the secularists, the materialists, the rationalists.
- #3. These people will lead the church back into the world and away from God. These personalities represent the antithesis of God. Jesus reported that "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (v. 10.)
- #4. The Lord put His life on the altar (v. 15.) The "religious secularists" pursued personal ends, cultural perspectives and temporal advantage. But they are "not concerned about the sheep" (v. 13.) Yet they want to lead the people of God.

#5. Many, if not most, of the churches in America are aligning with the culture and against revealed truth. Rationalist leaders have urged the adoption of an ambiguous faith. It is riddled with uncertainty, doubts and distrust of the Bible. It embraces the "values" of the age and "robs" us of faith in revealed absolutes! They are "thieves"!