

THE INVENTORY OF ANALYTICAL ELEMENTS:

The purpose of this series of studies is for us to grow more adept at comprehending just how personalities involved in scriptural episodes either did or did not relativize the revelation of the Lord.

Relativization of the Word of God is accomplished in several ways, but always by subjecting the Word to human constructs. We intend to use these categories as a basis for making an analysis of the various passages selected for this study. There can be more than these listed and please make use of any that you can think of that are not included in this inventory.

1. EXPERIENCE: In any situation it is likely that one will refer to one's experience as the yardstick by which to take the measure of the circumstance. By relying on the dictum of our experience, then the Word of God is pushed to the margins. The Word of the Lord does indeed in most cases contradict human lived experience.

2. HUMAN INTELLIGENCE: If the starting point for understanding any situation is human intelligence, then once again the purpose of revelation has been subverted. This of course is the practice of pride which makes the will of God relative to the intelligence of man. Everything in Scripture teaches us that it is human intelligence that is to be subject to relativization--not the other way around.

3. TEMPORAL VARIABLES: Everything on the temporal side of our existence goes under this general categorization. Here we stipulate the material elements or the physical aspects of the situation. We call them variables because they may vary from situation to situation, but they are always present and perceived through our five senses. Under this category goes Goliath the giant, the Red Sea and even death. Once the temporal variables are used as the foundation of reasoning and behavior, then the Word of God has been relativized to them. The Scriptures disallow this.

4. COMMUNITY: We are social creatures and therefore what the community has to say is considered very important to us. To stand apart from and in opposition to the will of the community is a dangerous thing to do. Still, all of the great exemplars of faith in the Bible show that the community does not have the right to relativize what the Lord has said. The Word of God is not relative to the community that receives; rather, it is the community that must be subject to the expressed will of the Lord.

5. HISTORY: If the Bible is read as a work of history, then the intuitive action would be to relativize the Word to that history. This approach has been institutionalized in the practice of hermeneutics, or what is known as "the science of interpretation." It may appear to be a very reasonable use of the text of Scripture to treat it as history, but the effect is very destructive. In hermeneutics, the assumption is that any passage to be studied must be placed back in its historical context if it is to be understood. But it is the human historian that supplies this history. Therefore, inevitably the passage and its

critical language content is made relative to that human perspective.

6. CULTURE: Human culture exercises great influence over us all. But from the biblical point of view we are not allowed to think nor react as mere members of the world cultures. All culture is to be brought subject to the Revelation of the Lord.

7. RACE: In the same way, we are not given liberty to think in racial terms. To be a member of a certain racial group is incidental in regard to the reading of the Word of God. There is no such thing as “Black Theology,” “Latino Theology,” “White Middle Class Theology,” etc. We are judged as souls in service to God.

8. TIME: Here is the critical element that reaches all parts of human thinking and human reaction. Men believe they live within specific temporal limits. Consequently, we require that certain things appear within a time framework considered to be “reasonable.” A good example of this is the story of Abraham and Sarah, who fell victim to the powerful psychological effect of time and therefore opted for a natural solution to their circumstance.

9. DESIRE/AMBITION: Nothing is beyond the reach of human desire and ambition. Such things color every fragment of life. Unless we take direct action against them, their influence will be decisive. Scripture is very clear on this. All human agendas are to be relegated to the interest of the Almighty.