

## **Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. The name is derived from the Greek "Hermes" who was believed to be the messenger of the gods. His magic wand had the power to close the eyes of mortals, to cause dreams, and to wake the slumbering. The word is now applied to the way we read and understand the Bible. The subject is indeed relevant, for our "hermeneutic" determines both our life style and our eternal destiny.

This was brought vividly to mind by the story of Randy and Vicki Weaver in the August 28th, NEWSWEEK. They were married in 1971 and were in the process of experiencing the "American Dream." They lived in the nicest house on the block, and owned a Mustang, Corvette, and Triumph. They became ashamed, however, of their hedonistic lifestyle, and moved to the wilds of northern Idaho. The reason for this abrupt change was their "hermeneutic."

They called themselves legalists, because they believed the Bible was the literal word of God. Based upon their understanding of Scripture, they concluded that the forces of the Soviet Union, the U.S. Government, and Jewish bankers, were ready to strike against the American people. A passage from Ezekiel was read: "Son of man, (Christian Americans,) set thy face against Gog, (the grand conspiracy,) . . . And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God." Randy collected an arsenal of weapons and slept with a loaded pistol under his pillow.

As you know, this hermeneutic resulted in the death of his wife, Vicki, their son, Samuel, and a Deputy Marshal, William Degan. The bizarre and bloody confrontation at Ruby Ridge also resulted in a shakeup in the F.B.I., and a \$3.1 million settlement to Randall Weaver, and their three surviving children.

The people of God have always had their own "hermeneutic." Quite frequently, it has been wrong. When Jesus was placed on trial, for example, the irreligious Roman ruler was about to let Him go. Pilate brought Jesus out to the people and declared, "**I find no fault in him!**" The Jews, however, had been studying the Bible. They answered: "**We have a law, and by our law he ought to die . . .**" (John 10:7.)

Please fine tune your focus on this remarkable situation. Jesus was "God manifest in the flesh." It was His Holy Spirit that inspired the writing of the Bible. The Jewish people had been given the Bible. To them pertained "**the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises**" (Rom. 9:4.) They not only studied the Bible, they committed large portions to memory. They wrote it on the door posts of their homes, and bound it around their foreheads. They counted the "jots" and "tittles," of the Law and claimed to reverence God in all they did. Yet, they interpreted the Bible in such a way, that they crucified the Author of the Bible.

When Jesus was upon the earth, it was the "common people" who heard Him gladly (Mk. 12:37.) They didn't need to split theological hairs or debate the meaning of a Hebrew verb. They simply followed Jesus! The word "theology," literally means the "Word of God." The theology of the common people was therefore quite simple. It was Jesus! Jesus was their theology. They simply followed in His steps, and did what He wanted them to do.

The word "creed," comes from the Latin "credo," which means, "I believe." The oldest creeds are the most simple. "Jesus is Lord," for example, is a Biblical creed (I Cor. 12:3.) Later creeds were larger and more complex. By the time of the Reformation, the creeds were so complicated that it was necessary to write commentaries to explain them. This period was characterized by religious wars, fought by factions in the "Christian faith." Let's return to the simple hermeneutic of the First Century, and simply focus on following Jesus!