

of Scripture. Here we ask the question, "Can we approximate the God-intended meaning of Scripture sufficiently to be able to affirm that our understanding of the Word of God is correct?" If the answer to this question is no, then transmission has failed, and all the previous steps are futile. If we cannot have correct understanding of the Word of God, then salvation itself becomes impossible, because saving faith involves knowledge of, assent to, and trust in the redemptive truths of Christ's incarnation, atonement and resurrection. Because believers have been born again by the Spirit of God, they can understand the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14-15). Because believers have the anointing (the gift of spiritual enlightenment or understanding) of the indwelling Holy Spirit, they are able to perceive and discern truth (1 John 2:20-21,27). The Holy Spirit is both the infallible Author of Scripture and the infallible Interpreter of Scripture; and therefore believers can have a correct understanding of the Word of God.

Having said this, however, we recognize that among professing Christians there are presuppositionalists and evidentialists, young-earth creationists and old-earth creationists, dichotomists and trichotomists, Calvinists and Arminians. Baptists and paedobaptists, dispensationalists and covenant theology adherents, amillennialists, postmillennialists and premillennialists, pretribulationists and posttribulationists. In fact, there are even inerrantists and errantists! How can we reconcile these differences of interpretation with the claim that it is possible to have a correct understanding of the Word of God? Shall we say that all of these interpretations are correct, and that all of them are informed by the infallible Interpreter of Scripture, the Holy Spirit?

I believe that the disparity, can at least partly be explained by the recognition of four factors: (1) the continuing effects of sin upon even the regenerate human understanding; (2) the differences in the systems of hermeneutics devised by biblical scholars; (3) the frequent gaps between good theory and bad practice; and (4) the frequent failure to distinguish essentials from nonessentials, or verities from distinctives.

In the midst of all these differences of interpretation, three facts should give us hope. First, our understandings, our hermeneutics, our practice and our emphases are, by God's grace, always remediable, always open to correction and modification. Second, all born-again Christians have more in common than they have in difference; they have a greater unity than