

## EVIDENCE AND THE HANDLING THEREOF

If six people received the same (uninspired) letter from a friend, the basic elements involved in interpreting the letter would be: (1) the letter itself, and (2) the handling of the content of the letter. Similarly, before anyone can be a good student of the Bible (i.e., accurately interpret the message God has for man), he must understand that the basic elements involved in Biblical interpretation are: (1) the total evidence, and (2) the handling of that evidence.

Though God through Scripture was only giving one message (Acts 17:11) to everyone (just as the "friend" in his letter to the six meant to do), failure on either of these two basic elements may (and very likely will) result in conflicting Bible interpretations by different people. Since most of us use texts of the Bible that are alike, this practically eliminates the problem of our receiving a "different letter" as being the primary cause of contradictory interpretations and divisive doctrines. So what is left to claim responsibility for such? The "handling" of the content as it involves logic or illogic.

### *The Evidence Itself*

The phrase, *the evidence*, is synonymous with the expression, *the total context*, and refers to the adding together of three things: (1) the specific statement of the Bible under consideration, (2) the immediate context of that statement, and (3) the remote context of that statement. It is important to understand the meaning of these expressions.

### *Handling the Evidence*

The mere reading (or even memorization) of the Bible text is not sufficient to guarantee that one will understand what the Bible actually teaches. One must surely know what the Bible says, that is, he must know the actual (explicit) statements making up Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Additionally one must learn how the various statements, paragraphs, chapters, and books relate to one another.

### *Rational or Irrational?*

Basically, there are only two alternatives as to how one will react to evidence: (1) he can choose to be rational, or (2) he can choose to be irrational. Since the religious world has available for its use exactly the same totality of Bible statements or evidence, it should be perfectly clear to us all that it is not enough merely to know what the evidence consists of. One must also properly interpret that evidence. One can learn what the Bible means only by correctly reasoning about what the Bible says. In short, one must correctly apply the principles and rules of logic to the totality of statements making up the entire Bible.

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