

The Deep Things of God
By Jon Paulien

Chapter Four

Safeguards for Biblical Study

Self-Deception and Bible Study

There is a major problem that we all face when we open the Bible: self-deception. One Scripture deals directly with this problem: “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9) The problem described here is self-deception. Your heart is deceitful. My heart is deceitful. In fact, our hearts are so deceitful we don’t even realize how much we are deceived. This has major implications for the way we read the Bible. As I noted above, the Alexandrian approach is the “natural” way to read the Bible. It is easy for us to read our own ideas, concepts, and needs into Scripture and turn the Bible into a book that reads just the way we believe.

When I’m doing systematic theology—asking questions about what is truth for me—my defense mechanisms (remember them?) get involved. Human beings naturally—even unconsciously—tend to avoid ideas and situations that would be painful to them. So whenever you come face-to-face with the Bible, knowing that you are looking for truth, there is a

tendency for the natural defense mechanisms of sin to get in the way. If we see something in the Bible that will call us wrong—call us sinners—we like to avoid that as much as possible. So, it is natural to read the Bible in such a way as to avoid learning what we don't want to know.

But there is a way out of this dilemma. The best remedy for self-deception is exegesis. Exegesis helps us bypass the defense mechanisms that cause us to misread the Bible. I've developed a definition of exegesis that is kind of fun. It goes like this: "Exegesis is the art of learning how to read the Bible in such a way as to leave open the possibility that you might learn something." Often we study the Bible but we don't learn anything because we don't want to discover that what we are doing is wrong and that we may have to change. So, as Jeremiah 17:9 points out, it is natural for us to deceive ourselves— even as we are studying the Bible.

But exegesis can help us deal with self-deception because it invites a descriptive approach to the Bible. A descriptive approach means that the internal pressure to distort the Bible's meaning is turned off. If I am describing what John is saying to the churches of Asia Minor in the first century, I don't have to feel any pressure because I'm not a member of a church in Asia Minor and I don't live in the first century. So exegesis allows us to face the reality of God's Word. I can describe what John was saying to them without it necessarily affecting me. By removing the internal pressure, I can be more honest with the text than I would otherwise be.

But here's the best part. Once you have exegeted a biblical text, you can never read it the same way again. You cannot avoid the deeper implications of that text as might have been possible before. Exegesis opens the way for the Bible to touch our hearts with just what we

need to know and understand.

The Role of the Original Languages

The best safeguard against self-deception is an exegesis based on the original languages, the Greek and the Hebrew. Genuine descriptive exegesis is more difficult for me in English (my native language), because English is filled with associations to my own, personal past. As a child I heard English being used in my home. Every word in that language came to me in the context of a certain time, place, and circumstance. So for me, every word of the Bible triggers associations with my own history, my own personal past. It evokes the events and contexts in which I encountered those words and the meanings those words had in those contexts. It's almost impossible, therefore, not to read my own ideas into the Bible when I read it in English. Reading one's self into the Bible is perfectly natural until one becomes conscious of the need to learn a better way of reading the Bible.

Learning to read the New Testament in the Greek, however, allows you to break the bonds of the past and experience the text as it was meant to be experienced when it was first written. Biblical Greek is taught in terms of its original context. Students of biblical Greek use lexicons and dictionaries to unpack words in the context of the first-century world. To learn the Greek of the New Testament is to break away from the familiar associations that blind interpreters to the deeper connections of the text. When an interpreter develops a reading knowledge of the Greek New Testament, associations start popping up that would not have been seen in translation.

Some people raise the question, “Well, if that’s the case, wouldn’t modern Greeks have a special advantage over us in reading the book of Revelation?” No, actually they would be at some disadvantage. Greeks today learn their language the same way you and I learned English or whatever your native language is. For Greeks it is a natural tendency to see modern meanings in the ancient language of the Greek New Testament.

I realize, however, that most people reading this book will never have the opportunity to learn Greek, or to become specialists in the ancient time, place, and circumstances in which the book of Revelation was written. Is it possible, nevertheless, to do serious, honest exegesis? I believe it is. I’d like to suggest six study safeguards that will help anyone interpret the biblical text while avoiding the kind of bizarre misreadings that come so naturally to the human condition. These six principles provide interpreters with the kind of biblical balance that is necessary when dealing with a difficult book like Revelation.

A Life Hermeneutic

1) Authentic Prayer and Self-Distrust

When you open the Bible, it is important to open it in much prayer and self-distrust. If human hearts are exceedingly wicked and deceptive, then the greatest barrier to Scriptural understanding is the lack of a teachable spirit. If you don’t have a teachable spirit, then it doesn't matter how much Greek you know or how many Ph.D.’s you accumulate, your learning will not open the Word to you. True knowledge of God does not come from merely intellectual pursuit or academic study. It arises from a willingness to receive the truth no matter what the

cost.

Texts that underline this principle are:

“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

1 Corinthians 2:14

“They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”

2 Thessalonians 2:10

“If any of you lack wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

James 1:5

Knowledge of God comes from a willingness to receive the truth from God no matter what it costs. Knowledge of God can cost you your life, your family, your friends, and your reputation. So how badly do you really want to know God? If you want the truth no matter what the cost, you will receive it. God is willing for you to find the truth if you are willing to be taught.

So I'd like to suggest that you begin your study of the book of Revelation with what I call authentic prayer. That means prayer for a teachable spirit. Prayer that God will open your heart, bypass your defense mechanisms, and teach you what you need to know. Authentic prayer goes something like this: “Lord, I want the truth about the book of Revelation no matter what the cost to me personally.” That's a hard prayer to pray. But that kind of prayer will open the way to fresh insight into the Word.

2) Use a Variety of Translations

If you are not familiar with the Greek and Hebrew, an excellent alternative is to use a variety of translations. Every translation has its limitations and weaknesses, and to some degree reflects the biases of the translator(s). So the safest course of action for a Christian who doesn't know the original languages is to compare several translations against each other.

Let's suppose you are comparing five different translations of a particular text. If all five translations agree, the underlying Greek text must be reasonably clear. That is the kind of text upon which you can base your faith with confidence. On the other hand, if all five translations go in different directions, it is a signal that the original language is ambiguous in some way. You will want to be cautious about insisting that any particular translation of this text reflects the original. You will be reluctant to base your belief system on an unclear text.

But what if four translations say roughly the same thing, but the fifth one is way off in another county? That is usually a clue toward figuring out the bias of that particular translation. Every translation has some bias or another and through careful comparison you can develop of sense of these biases. The authority that you as an interpreter give to any particular translation of a text will depend on the level of certainty that it is accurately based on the original. Looking at a variety of translations can give anyone a clearer picture of the original text.

Using a variety of translations, of course, helps us overcome pet readings of the text. We all have favorite texts that mean certain things to us. When we pick up a new translation, it is fun to go right to those favorite texts to see how they're translated in that Bible. We are often disappointed when we do this. The translator just didn't see what we see. But honesty

will compel us to acknowledge we often twist the actual meaning of a text to maintain a favorite or pet reading. Because we have a pet reading of the text, we cannot see its real significance in its original context. But being open to a variety of translations enables us to become more honest with the text.

3) Favor the Clear Texts

If you want to let the Scriptures speak for themselves, spend the majority of your time in the sections of Scripture that are reasonably clear. There are many parts of the Bible about which there is little disagreement among Christians. Many parts are extremely clear and others are extremely difficult. A great safeguard to your study of Scripture is to spend the majority of your time in the sections that are reasonably clear. The clear texts of Scripture establish the reader in the common ground of the Bible and the great verities of its message, safeguarding the interpreter against an inappropriate use of texts that are more ambiguous.

Adventists in particular seem to gravitate to the ambiguous texts of the Bible, texts that are difficult to understand because they can point in more than one direction. People who misuse the Bible tend to work with unclear texts, treat them as if they were clear, and then base their theology on this “clear” reading. When people spend the majority of their time in the difficult texts of Scripture they usually end up having to distort clear texts of Scripture because the message of the clear texts contradicts the theology they have developed from the unclear texts. This is one reason for the many bizarre readings of Revelation. The book attracts people who love to play with the edges of Scripture, people who have an unhealthy need to find

something new, fresh, and exciting to share with others.

If you spend the majority of your time studying passages like Daniel 11, the seals, and the trumpets, however, you will probably go crazy, spiritually if not psychologically. Texts like the seals and the trumpets are extremely difficult and it's easy to distort them and make them carry a weight they were never meant to carry. But if you spend the majority of your time in the *clear* texts of the Bible, they will safeguard you against making an inappropriate use of the seals and trumpets. Immersion in the clear texts of the Bible keeps you from applying less-clear texts in ways that contradict the central teachings of the Bible.

4) Favor General Reading

A fourth, and most vital, principle is to compare the results of one's Bible study with much general reading of Scripture so that the obsession with detail doesn't lead one away from the central thrust of the Bible. People often study the Bible in a fragmented way. They study a verse at a time, and then compare that verse with all kinds of other texts found in a concordance. In a way the concordance becomes their real Bible. They take a word, look at snippets from 300-400 texts, and pick out those that seem to say what they want the Bible to say. This approach can even tempt a preacher.

Sometimes a preacher will come to the night before a sermon and realize at 10 or 11 PM that (s)he is not ready for the sermon that is to be preached the next day. So the preacher bids the family good night, and retires to the study. The preacher thinks about the congregation and the kind of message that would encourage and strengthen it. By 12:30 AM an outline

begins to form. Before long the message is looking pretty good. But before the preacher heads for bed he or she reaches for a concordance. For what purpose? To find a few Bible texts that seem to say what the preacher is trying to say.

What is that preacher doing? Cloaking his or her own ideas in the trappings of Scripture. The sermon was not developed out of the Bible. It arose from the preacher's reflection on a real-life situation, not from the biblical text. By sprinkling the sermon with a variety of texts drawn from a concordance, the pastor's ideas are undergirded by the apparent authority of the Bible. The best safeguard against such unintentional misuse of Scripture is much general reading of the Bible. Broad reading of the Bible sensitizes you to the literary strategies of the biblical authors. Use of a concordance, on the other hand, puts you in charge of the process, instead of the biblical author.

The use of a concordance and the comparing of scripture with scripture has its place. As we work our way through the book of Revelation, we will do much comparing of scripture with scripture. Sometimes Revelation will be compared with the Old Testament, sometimes with the New, and sometimes with texts outside the Bible. All of this will help us understand what John's original intention for Revelation was. But when you spend all of your time comparing scripture with scripture you can lose the forest for the trees. General reading of the Bible, on the other hand, makes one sensitive to the larger context of Scripture.

For general reading I recommend a modern translation that is easy to follow. While the King James Version, for example, is very helpful for deep study, I have great difficulty following the flow of the story from one chapter to the next. General reading helps you to look at the big

picture and put isolated texts together with their contexts so that the meaning can become clear. With a concordance, on the other hand, we tend to isolate texts from their contexts. Concordance study, without the control of broad reading, is like cutting fifty texts out of the Bible, tossing them like a salad in a bowl, and finally pulling them out one by one and saying, "This is the Word of the Lord."

The process is all the more dangerous when it is done on a computer. Computers have wonderful Bible programs in which you can enter a word or two and discover all the texts that have that word or combination of words. I have such a program myself and find it extremely useful. But Bible programs make it so easy to play with the ideas of the Bible that you may never actually read the Bible itself. The meanings that you draw from computer texts may have nothing to do with the original intention.

General reading of the Bible helps the interpreter to get the "big picture" view of the Bible. It safeguards the reader against bizarre interpretations of its isolated parts. General reading helps bring you into a teachable spirit and helps you see the text as it was intended to be read. The Bible is not supposed to learn from us; we are supposed to learn from the Bible. Hence the recommendation, "Spend the majority of your time reading the Bible instead of studying it."

5) Criticism of Peers

A vital principle for the study of Revelation is to give careful attention to the criticism of peers. For the study of Revelation, a peer is anyone who has given the text the same kind of

careful attention you have. The most valuable of peers, in fact, is the person who disagrees with you or is particularly gifted or experienced with the tools of exegesis. As I mentioned before, one of the biggest problems in biblical understanding is that each of us have a natural bent to self-deception (Jeremiah 17:9). That self-deception is so deep that sometimes—even if you are praying, using a variety of translations, and focusing on the clear texts and broad reading—you can still misread the Bible on your own. So the best antidote to self-deception is to constantly subject one's own understandings to the criticism of others who are making equally rigorous efforts to understand those texts.

It reminds me of Alcoholics Anonymous and the process called “intervention.” When it comes to alcohol, self-deception is very much in play and the alcoholic is usually the last person to know that there is a problem. Professionals, therefore, recommend the process of intervention in which family, friends, acquaintances, and authority figures gather and say, “Yes, you are an alcoholic and I saw you do this or that.”

As an alcoholic is confronted time and time again with the facts, it becomes more likely that he or she will eventually recognize that there is a problem and seek help. I'd like to suggest that intervention is often necessary with exegesis of the Bible as well. We need the criticisms of others who say, “I've looked at this text carefully and I just don't see what you are seeing. To me the text says something totally different.”

It may be painful to listen to that kind of criticism. But it is the only way to avoid what I call “Saddam Hussein syndrome.” You see, none of Saddam Hussein's advisors ever disagreed with him, because everyone who disagreed with him was soon dead. As a result, he usually got

very bad advice. I can imagine him asking his advisors before both Gulf Wars, "What do you think? Can we beat the coalition that is gathering against us?" No doubt the unanimous answer was, "If you are in charge, we can't lose." Bad advice! But bad advice is what you get when you don't listen to people who disagree with you.

You see, I don't learn much from people who agree with me because we already see things the same way. It is people who disagree with me, who see the text differently than I do, who can teach me something about the text. We all have certain blind spots with regard to the Bible. These blind spots are rooted in our self-deception. But when I am confronted with someone very different from me, someone of another race, or even another religion, I am confronted with realities in the text that I would never have seen on my own. I may not end up agreeing with Roman Catholic conclusions about Revelation, but a Roman Catholic will see things in the text that I would miss (and vice versa). Thus, my knowledge of God's word is deepened by the insights of others.

People I disagree with vigorously will see things in the text that I would never see because of my blind spots and my defense mechanisms. The other person may be just as messed up as I am, but if that person has a different set of defense mechanisms and blind spots than I do, he or she will see things in the text that I would miss and I will see things that they will miss. Together we can see much more clearly together than separately. Even in the study of the Bible, we need to listen to others, particularly people who have also studied the Bible carefully and have come to different conclusions than we have.

6) Appropriate Use of Ellen White

For Seventh-day Adventists there is one further issue that must be addressed. Ellen G. White's comments on the book of Revelation stimulate much productive insight, but her writings can be used in such a way as to obscure the meaning of the Biblical text and make it serve the agenda of the interpreter.¹ Off-hand comments in various contexts can be universalized or applied in ways that run counter to the implications of the biblical text itself. Such use is really abuse and results in diminishing her authority rather than enhancing it.

Inspiration is truly handled with respect when the intention of an inspired writer is permitted to emerge from the text in its original context (exegesis). As we noted in the previous chapter, messages from living prophets can easily be clarified upon request. But once the prophet has passed from the scene, we are on safest ground when the intent of each inspired text is allowed to emerge by means of careful exegesis.²

The role of inspiration is particularly problematic with regard to Ellen White's use of Scripture. An interpreter with a strong preconceived idea can easily utilize Ellen White's Scriptural quotations in such a way as to overthrow the plain meaning of the text in its biblical context.³ Inferences drawn from the text of Revelation are at times creatively combined with inferences drawn from the Spirit of Prophecy to produce a result which cannot be plainly demonstrated from either source. Though usually well-intentioned, such sidetracks divert the people of God from careful attention to the plain meaning of the text, and thus encourage careless methods of interpretation that can damage the cause of God. With the goal of safeguarding her inspired intention, six tentative guidelines for the use of Ellen White in the

study of Revelation follow.

1) Quotation or Echo?

First, it is important to determine whether Ellen White was intending to cite a particular biblical text or was merely “echoing” it. If the text is quoted and a reference is given, the matter is fairly clear. But often she uses biblical words or phrases in isolation and without apparent reference to their original context. In such cases it isn’t immediately clear if she was aware that she was using biblical language or if that language was just flowing naturally from her past experience with the Bible.

The procedure for determining allusions that we explain in chapter seven is helpful in determining her intention as well. If we determine that she is not quoting a Bible text, but merely echoing its language, we should not assume that she is expressing a judgment on the biblical writer’s intention for that text. She may be drawing a valid spiritual lesson when she echoes Scripture, but it is not necessarily the same lesson the biblical writer was trying to impress upon his readers.

2) Exegetical, Theological or Homiletical?

Second, where Ellen White clearly refers the reader to a Scriptural passage, one should ask how she is using the passage. Is she using it exegetically— making a statement about the original meaning of the passage in the author’s context? Is she using it theologically— discussing the implication that passage has for a larger theology based on Scripture as a whole and

focusing particularly on God's will for her readers? Is she using it homiletically— playing with the power of the biblical language in a preaching situation?⁴

To interpret a homiletical usage as though it were an exegetical statement will distort not only her intention but the meaning of the biblical statement as well. While more study needs to be done on this question, it is my opinion that Ellen White rarely uses Scripture exegetically (i.e. being primarily concerned with the biblical writer's intent).⁵ As was the case with the classical prophets of the OT, her main concern was to speak to her contemporary situation. As a result, she normally uses Scripture theologically and homiletically rather than exegetically.

To say this is not to limit Ellen White's authority. Her intention in a given statement should be taken with utmost seriousness. At the same time we must be careful not to limit the authority of the Biblical writer. We should not deny a biblical writer's intention on the basis of a homiletical usage of a Bible passage. What I am pleading for here is that we learn to respect Ellen White's own intention in her use of biblical material. Since she often uses Scripture in other than exegetical ways, statements quoting Revelation must be examined with great care before being dogmatically applied in the exegesis of the book.⁶

3) Published or Unpublished?

Third, Ellen White herself makes a distinction between her published writings and other material.⁷ We can best understand her theological intention in the writings that were most carefully written and edited by her. Off-hand comments in letters or stenographically

reproduced from sermons may not reflect her settled opinion on timeless issues. Compilations of her writings by others need to be used even more cautiously, since the selection and ordering of material can, in itself, make a theological statement. If something is found only in letters and manuscripts, particularly if it occurs only once, the interpreter needs to demonstrate that it is a true reflection of her considered and consistent intent.

4) Central or Peripheral?

Fourth, the question should be asked, “Is Ellen White’s use of a given Scripture text critical to her conclusion in a given statement?” If her use of a given Scripture is peripheral to her central theme it may not partake of a thought-out exegesis. As is the case with Scripture, we are on safest ground when we refer to statements whose main intent is to address the issue we are concerned about.

When it comes to the book of Revelation her statements will be most helpful when the interpretation of a whole passage was the reason she was writing. If you want to know her view on Revelation 13, go to the statements where she systematically works through Revelation 13. On the other hand, much of the book of Revelation is never made central to any of her discussions. We must exercise great caution in applying off-hand and peripheral statements to our own interpretation of Revelation.⁸

5) Earlier or Later?

Fifth, Ellen White’s later writings should be allowed to clarify positions taken in earlier

writings. As her writing skills increased, her ability to accurately express the thoughts she received from God correspondingly increased. And as earlier statements became subject to controversy, she would offer clarifying statements to make her intention clear. A well-known example of this is found in EW 85-96 where she offers a series of clarifications of earlier statements and visionary descriptions.⁹ So it is important to allow later statements regarding the biblical text to clarify her meaning in earlier statements.

6) Singular or Frequent Usage?

Finally, how often did she utilize a scriptural passage in a particular way? All other things being equal, the number of times a specific concept is repeated is in direct proportion to a writer's passion for that topic to be clearly understood. It is not normally wise to base an interpretation on a single passage. An idea that is repeated in a variety of circumstances and by means of a variety of expressions is not easily misunderstood or misused.

Ellen White and Exegesis

The main reason for suggesting these basic guidelines is the problem of ambiguity in Ellen White's writings. Her statements are often susceptible of more than one interpretation.¹⁰ This is not due to confusion or lack of clarity on her part necessarily, it is due to the fact that she often did not address directly the questions that concern us most today. An unbiased reader will repeatedly find statements that answer our concerns with less clarity than we would prefer. The biased reader, on the other hand, when confronted with an ambiguous statement,

picks the option out of several which best fits his/her preconceived ideas and hammers it home to those who might disagree.

The reality is that many exegetical questions cannot be clarified from Ellen White's writings. The wisest course is to avoid using ambiguous statements as definitive evidence to prove a point. It is always appropriate, of course, to point out the possibilities inherent in such statements.

Conclusion

The nice thing about the interpretive strategies we have discussed in this chapter is that anyone can practice them. You don't need to have a Ph.D. or a specialized education in order to read the Bible accurately. If you follow these principles, you won't make the kind of mistakes that David Koresh and his followers made. These principles benefit anyone, even scholars of the Bible. In fact, if you know Greek and Hebrew, but you don't practice descriptive exegesis, pray, emphasize clear texts and general reading, or listen to others, there is a good chance that the Bible will be misunderstood, regardless of how skillful your procedures are.

In the following chapters we apply these principles of exegesis in a practical way. I will show step-by-step how to uncover the intended meaning of the book of Revelation. This process will be more than just a dry overview of methods. Sample texts will come alive as the methods are applied. In the process we will discover some of the book of Revelation's best-kept secrets.

Notes

1. “Those who are not walking in the light of the message, may gather up statements from my writings that happen to please them, and that agree with their human judgment, and, by separating these statements from their connection, and placing them beside human reasonings, make it appear that my writings uphold that which they condemn.” Letter 208, 1906

2. “Many from among our own people are writing to me, asking with earnest determination the privilege of using my writings to give force to certain subjects which they wish to present to the people in such a way as to leave a deep impression upon them. It is true that there is a reason why some of these matters should be presented; but I would not venture to give my approval in using the testimonies in this way, or to sanction the placing of matter which is good in itself in the way which they propose.

“The persons who make these propositions, for aught I know, may be able to conduct the enterprise of which they write in a wise manner; but nevertheless I dare not give the least license for using my writings in the manner which they propose. In taking account of such an enterprise, there are many things that must come into consideration; for in using the testimonies to bolster up some subject which may impress the mind of the author, the extracts may give a different impression than that which they would were they read in their original connection.”

The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies for the Church," p. 26. Quoted in Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant, by Arthur White, p. 86.

3. When she applied the phrase “touch not, taste not, handle not” to the use of tea, coffee, alcohol, and tobacco (MH 335) she was certainly echoing the language of Col 2:21, but certainly not in the manner in which Paul used it! For her the phrase had a positive use in relation to a proper abstention from harmful substances, for Paul the phrase, in context, represented an unhealthy asceticism that diverted attention from Christ (Col 2:18-23).

When she applied the phrase “God made man upright” to the need for good posture (Ed 198) she never intended to imply that the author of Ecclesiastes was discussing posture in Eccl 7:27-29. In PP 49 she used the phrase in harmony with the moral intention of the biblical author.

4. See the above illustration from her use of Col 2:21.

5. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a high percentage of her exegetical statements are probably found in the book *Acts of the Apostles* which contains specific discussions of NT books in their original setting. Many exegetical statements are also found in *Christ's Object Lessons* and *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. Cf. the comments by Robert Olson in *Ministry*, December, 1990, p. 17.

6. Where she appears to use a text exegetically, yet a tension remains between her use of a text and the apparent intent of the author's language, two possibilities should be kept in mind. (1) It is possible that the interpreter has misunderstood the intent of either the biblical writer or Ellen White, or both. (2) An inspired person can apply a biblical passage to his/her contemporary situation in a local sense without exhausting the ultimate intention of the original writer. (Note Peter's use of Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:16-21 and Jesus' use of Dan 7:13,14 in Matt 9:6.)

7. 5T 696 cf. 1SM 66, TM 33.

8. Revelation is most central to her discussion in chapter 57 (pp. 579-592) of *Acts of the Apostles* and to much of the latter part of the book *Great Controversy*.

9. A theological example of her maturing clarity of expression is her understanding of the deity of Christ. No one can mistake her clear belief in the full deity of Christ as expressed in later statements such as 1SM 296, DA 530, RH April 5, 1906, and ST May 3, 1899. But pre-1888 statements such as 1SP 17-18 are ambiguous enough to be read as Arian if the later statements are ignored (She updates and clarifies 1SP 17-18 in PP 37-38). To use 1SP 17-18 to demonstrate her view on the topic while ignoring the later clarifying statements is to hopelessly distort her intention.

10. An excellent example of an ambiguous statement can be found in TM 445. She states there that, “The sealing of the servants of God (in Revelation 7) is the same that was shown to Ezekiel in vision. John also had been a witness of this most startling revelation.” She follows with a number of items that are common to both books. Since the visions of John and Ezekiel are analogous, but certainly not identical, two possibilities of interpretation emerge. (1) The events of around 600 BC partook of the same principles that will manifest themselves in the final crisis portrayed in Rev 7. (2) Ezekiel describes not the events of 600 BC but the end-time. While one or the other interpretation will be considered more likely based on the prior assumptions a reader brings to the text, either is possible based on the language she chose to use in context.