

Distorted Approaches to Biblical Interpretation

Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding & Applying the Bible*, Revised & Expanded

Summary Descriptions

1. **Supernaturalistic** (premoderns, Jewish allegorizers, early church fathers)
 - a. Looks for hidden meanings or several meanings, uncovered through intuition and spiritual experiences
2. **Naturalistic** (modern rationalism)
 - a. Limits the meaning and significance of Scripture to those elements that conform to natural processes and human insight. Divine authorship and supernatural events are ruled out from the start
3. **Postmodern**
 - a. Finds the significance of the passage in one's personal perception of reality in an encounter with the biblical author's witness to his own experiences
4. **Dogmatic** (either supernaturalistic or naturalistic)
 - a. All specific interpretation is made to conform to a predetermined system of doctrine or external authority. The system determines the meaning.

E.G., Joshua's conquest of Jericho (Joshua 6)

1. **Supernaturalist**
 - a. Sees the marching around Jericho in silence as a mandate for Christians to witness by their "walk" in silence six days a week until the leader (preacher) on Sunday proclaims the gospel, and the walls of unbelief tumbling down and people are converted
2. **Naturalist**
 - a. Sees it as a made-up ancient story—since walls do not normally tumble before trumpet blasts—to teach the victory of good over evil against great odds
3. **Postmodern**
 - a. Focuses on call to personal religious faith that was at the writer's center of attention; story itself may only be a legend, details hold no importance
4. **Dogmatist**
 - a. Some might have a problem with the slaughter or the citizens of Jericho at God's command—a loving God would never order the death of innocent people
 - b. Other dogmatists would have no problem at all, believing that the people of Jericho were created for the purpose of damnation anyway