



Introduction: What Are You Really Hearing When You Read the Bible?

We live in an age where information is abundant but formation is scarce. It has never been easier to access a Bible: in print, on apps, on social media, through explanatory videos... and yet, it has never been easier to misinterpret it. Why? Because many times, instead of letting the Word of God speak, we impose on it what we *want* it to say. This phenomenon is called **eisegesis**. It's subtle, dangerous, and far more common than we think. It affects both Protestant theology and certain sectors of modern Catholicism. In this article, we will uncover its origin, its spiritual danger, its antidote, and how to protect ourselves from this error with wisdom, faith, and fidelity to Tradition.

I. What Is Eisegesis? Definition and Origin of the Term

The term *eisegesis* comes from the Greek εἰς- (*eis*, "into") and ἡγεῖσθαι (*hegesthai*, "to lead"), and literally means "to lead into" an interpretation. It is the **act of reading into the text something that is not there**, inserting one's own thoughts, emotions, ideologies, or personal beliefs into the Word of God.

This is the opposite of **exegesis**, which is the process of **drawing out the meaning** that the text actually intends, respecting its historical, literary, linguistic, and theological context.

Eisegesis, therefore, **does not listen to God**, but rather **listens to itself** through the sacred text. It is an act of spiritual pride, whether conscious or unconscious, that ends up turning the Bible into an instrument for confirming our own opinions.

II. A History of Distortion: Eisegesis Through the Centuries

From the early centuries of the Church, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church confronted personal and arbitrary interpretations of Scripture:

- **The Gnostics**, for example, read the Old Testament with occultist lenses, denying the incarnation of Christ and the goodness of creation.
- **Arius** used biblical passages out of context to deny the divinity of Christ.
- **The Protestant reformers of the 16th century**, especially Luther and Calvin, elevated personal interpretation above the Magisterium of the Church, laying the



foundation for modern subjectivism.

Luther even said:

“Scripture interprets itself.”

*But history shows that, far from bringing unity, this idea has produced **more than 45,000 different Christian denominations**, each with its own “reading” of the Bible.*

Eisegesis **breaks ecclesial communion**, generates heresies, and places the individual above Revelation.

III. Theological and Pastoral Dangers of Eisegesis

1. It Replaces the Word of God with the Word of Man

When someone interprets Scripture from their own ideas or emotions, **it is no longer God speaking**, but the reader. This causes the Bible to cease being the divine voice and become a sort of spiritual echo of the human ego.

2. It Justifies Sin

One of the most common temptations is to use biblical verses out of context to **justify immoral behavior**. Current examples:

- “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8) used to approve unions contrary to natural and divine law.
- “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Mt 7:1) as an excuse to tolerate sin without fraternal correction.
- “Christ has set us free” (Gal 5:1) to defend a false freedom without obedience or the cross.

3. It Breaks the Unity of the Faith

Without an authority to faithfully interpret Scripture, like the Church’s Magisterium, **each**



person becomes their own pope, their own council, their own religion. This weakens communion and breeds confusion.

4. It Feeds Relativism

Instead of seeking the objective truth of the faith, eisegesis promotes a “cafeteria” spirituality. Each person picks what they like from the Gospel and discards what demands conversion. The Bible becomes a buffet of motivational phrases.

IV. The Church’s Response: Catholic Exegesis Faithful to Tradition

The Church has always maintained that Sacred Scripture **cannot be interpreted apart from Tradition and the Magisterium**. Saint Peter warned us of this already in the first century:

“No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of private interpretation.” (2 Peter 1:20)

And Saint Jerome, translator of the Vulgate, reaffirmed this:

“Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”,
but he also added that Scripture must be **read in communion with the Church**, for outside of her there is no guarantee of truth.

How Does the Church Interpret Scripture?

- **With a historical-critical method**, but not a reductionist one.
- **In the light of Tradition**, which is the living life of the Holy Spirit in the Church.
- **With the guidance of the Magisterium**, which guarantees correct doctrine.
- **With prayer and humility**, so as not to impose our ideas on God.



V. Practical Applications: How to Avoid Falling into Eisegesis Today

1. Read the Bible with Humility, Not Prejudice

Before opening the Scriptures, ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you so you can **hear what God wants to say**, not what you want to find.

2. Rely on Good Commentaries and the Church's Teaching

Personal reading isn't enough. Use sources faithful to the Magisterium: the Fathers of the Church, Doctors, the Catechism, papal homilies, and trustworthy Catholic authors.

3. Avoid "Versicle-ism"

Don't take verses out of context to craft phrases that sound nice but are theologically empty. The Bible must be understood in its **entirety**, not as scattered quotations.

4. Join Bible Study Groups Faithful to the Magisterium

Not all "Bible study groups" are healthy. Look for those clearly in communion with Catholic doctrine.

5. Live a Sacramental Life

The sacraments dispose your heart to receive the Word with purity. Especially the Eucharist and Confession are key to reading the Bible with clean eyes.

VI. What About Protestants? The Bitter Fruit of Institutionalized Eisegesis

Protestantism, from its beginnings, embraced eisegesis as a method. *Sola Scriptura* —without Tradition or Magisterium— turned every believer into their own infallible interpreter. The result has been:

- Doctrinal contradictions (predestination vs free will, infant baptism yes or no, salvation by works or by faith alone...).



- Endless divisions: since Luther, thousands of churches have split off.
- Loss of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.
- Doctrinal justification of abortion, same-sex “marriage,” women’s ordination...

The problem was not reading the Bible, but reading it without the Church.

VII. Conclusion: The Word Is Meant to Be Heard, Not Manipulated

Dear reader, you are not called to be the *owner* of the Word, but its *servant*. God speaks to you in Scripture, but **not to confirm your ideas** —He speaks to **transform your heart**.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” (2 Tim 3:16)

Listen, learn, obey with love what the Lord says, and do not impose your voice over His. Only in this way will the Word become a **purifying sword** (Heb 4:12) and a **lamp for your steps** (Ps 119:105), not a spiritual disguise for your opinions.

Final Prayer

Lord, deliver me from imposing my ideas on Your Word. Teach me to listen with humility, to obey with love, and to live in truth. Grant me the gift of discernment, that I may not fall into errors disguised as faith. May Your Holy Spirit always guide me along the paths of Your Church. Amen.