

In Light of Logic

Accent

The fallacy of accent is employed whenever an emphasis is placed on a written or spoken communication in a way that materially alters its original or intended meaning. To interpret any piece of literature logically, one must be sensitive to the context and original meaning intended by the author and not alter that meaning by misplaced emphasis. This can be done quite subtly. Without changing a word, a piece of written material can be made to say something entirely different than what was intended by the author. A common form of this fallacy is the altering of punctuation, which is particularly significant for biblical research because the original text of Scripture contained no punctuation marks. For instance, the addition of a comma can dramatically alter the simple sentence, “God made man,” (as in God *created* man) to “God, made man” (as in God *became* man). What a big difference!

Likewise, “woman without her man would be lost” is a seemingly straightforward sentence, but watch how the meaning can be dramatically changed by the addition of a period and a comma: “Woman. Without her, man would be lost.”

Luke 23:43 (NIV) says, “Jesus answered him, ‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise’”, indicating that Jesus will be with the malefactor in Paradise later that same day. But if the comma is moved to the other side of “today,” an entirely different emphasis results: “I tell you the truth today, you shall (in the future) be with me in Paradise. That is the correct rendering (see *Is There Death After Life?*).