

"How to Rightly Interpret God's Word"
(A lesson on Basic Hermeneutics)
6/13/93

I. Why the <u>need</u> for accurate Bible Interpretation?

1. What is the <u>definition</u> of "Hermeneutics?"

   Hermeneutics is the science and art of interpreting so that we understand the __ of the Bible.

2. Why do we <u>need</u> hermeneutical principles?

   a. The Bible is of _____ _____ if we do not understand it as God intended.

      1) All _____ rests upon correct interpretation (II Tim. 3:16; II Tim. 4:2).

      2) _____ in belief and _ in behavior are results of wrong interpretation (II Pet. 3:15, 16.

   b. We must _____ the gap between our minds and the Bible.

      Four gaps an interpreter must bridge:

      _____
      THE GAP
      _
      THE GAP
      _____
      THE GAP
      _____
      THE GAP

      1) We must cross the gap of different <u>languages</u>.
      (We must know _____ was written)

      2) We must cross the gap of different <u>cultures</u>.
      (We must know to _____ it was originally written)

3) We must cross the gap of different time periods.
(We must know _____ it was originally written)

4) We must cross the gap of different circumstances.
(We must know _____ it was written)

**** Ask yourself: "What significance did this passage have to the ones to whom it was originally written?"***

II. What are the conditions for accurate Bible Interpretation?

1. You must be _____ ("born again")

2. You must be a _____ Christian, not carnal.

3. You must have a _____ of Scripture

4. You must be _____ to what you already know.

5. You must be _____ (yielded) to the Holy Spirit.

6. You must be willing to _____ whatever God says.

7. You must be willing to personally _____ whatever God says.

8. You must be willing to _____ whatever God says.

9. You must be willing to ___ hard and faithfully _____ God's Word.

a. Diligence is demanded - (The Bereans: Acts 17:11 - "Searched the Scriptures daily"; We must: "study (give diligence) to show thyself approved unto God . . ." - II Tim. 2:15a).

b. Principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) are essential - ". . . a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15b).

III. What are the rules for accurate Bible Interpretation?

4 Essential Principles (rules) of Interpretation:

1. Read the Bible _____ (normally, plainly)
   (The Literal Principle)
2. Understand the _____ (of the verses you are studying)
   (The Contextual Principle)
3. Consistently follow rules of _____ (as you study)
   (The Grammatical Principle)
4. _____ Scripture with Scripture (as you study)
   (The Theological Principle)

What are the basic principles that will guide me to an accurate interpretation of Scripture?

A. Avoid the traps of illegitimate Bible Interpretation

1. Beware of Building a "theological superstructure" on the foundation of only one verse of Scripture.

   (Don't build a doctrine from the support of only one verse without comparing that interpretation against the ret of Scripture.)

2. Beware of filtering Scripture through the grid of a dogmatic presupposed system or viewpoint.

   We all are prone to read the Bible having a set of preconceived ideas, cultural ideals, & biased world-views. Don't force your ideas & viewpoints into the text.

   (Don't see everything in Scripture through tinted "glasses" but rather submit your thoughts to the thoughts of Holy Scripture)

   Note: Systematic theology is valid & necessary but should be submissive to unbiased exegesis.

3. Beware of finding more meaning from a passage than is actually there.

   (Don't read between the lines; Interpret what God says not what He doesn't say)

B. Follow the rules of legitimate Bible Interpretation

1. Seek the ordinary (normal, plain) meaning of the Passage. (The Literal Principle)

This principle is based on the clarity of the Bible.

(The truth of the Scripture can be clearly seen without treating the Bible like some mystical or cryptic book with hidden meanings "between the lines")

"The news papers & media consistently speak condescendingly, if not derisively, of biblical "literalists" (McQuilkin, p.64)

a. Take the Bible for what it says at face value.

1) Seek the natural and obvious meaning of Scripture.

"If the normal (plain) sense makes good sense, seek no other sense, or you will have nonsense!"

2) Look for the obvious meaning intended by the Author.
Ask yourself: "What did this passage mean to the people who first recieved it from an apostle or prophet. Understand the historical, phisical & cultural setting in which the passage was written.

3) Look for the most natural meaning intended by the Author.

What the Bible says and what the Bible means are alwlays the same unless an obvious figure of speech is being used.

4) Seek the single meaning intended by the Author.

"Every passage of Scripture has only one meaning unless the author says there is another meaning" (McQuilkin, p.66)

For example some prophetic statements may have both an immediate fulfillment and a prophetic fulfilllment. If so the NT will declare such.

Let God say what He does say, instead of making Him say what you think He should have said.

Pull out the meaning of the text ("exegete") rather than putting your own idea into the text ("eisogete").

b. Identify the type of language being used by the Author.

For Emphasis or to aid retention God often uses figures of speech to drive home a point.

Always interpret the Bible literally unless:

1) A literal interpretation would contradict sound doctrine (EX: If Romans 6:1ff was teaching water baptism, salvation would be by works).

2) An obvious figure of speech is being used.
Examples of figures of speech:

(1) Comparisons (simile - using "like" or "as")

EX: "Is not My Word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces" (Jer. 23:29; cp. Is. 1:18)

(2) Substitutions

EX: "Go tell that fox" (Lk. 13:32); "Behold the Lamb of God" (Jn. 1:36); "I am the door" (Jn. 10:9).

(3) Exaggerations (to emphasize a point)

EX: "I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books..." (Jn. 21:25).

(4) Euphemisms (a less direct; less blunt; or softer way of saying something)

EX: "...that he (Judas) might go to his own place" (i.e. Hell) (Acts 1:25); "he covereth his feet" (i.e. he is relieving himself on the toilet - Jud. 3:24).

(5) Understatements

EX: "Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God..." (I Th. 2:15).

(6) Personifications (live or human qualities are given to that which does not have life [inanimate objects] or to concepts)

EX: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (Rom. 6:12); "lust bringeth forth sin" (Ja.1:15)

c. Don't allegorize Scripture.

1) What is allegorizing?

It is looking for hidden, "spiritually mystical" meanings behind what is said.

Rather than taking a word, sentence or paragraph literally, the interpreter imposes his own idea into the text.

Out of pride, the interpreter would say: "The true meaning is not the literal meaning. You are lacking spiritual understanding if you take the Bible literally because even an idiot can see the plain meaning; it takes special spiritual insight to see the "real," "deeper" meaning."

The Roman Catholic Church adopted this method of interpretation from her forefathers Origin and Augustine.

2) Examples of allegorical interpreting:

(1) Giving numerical value to letters in words.

(2) Finding types (predicted foreshadowings) in every minutest detail of the Old Testament

[discover types, don't create them]

(3) Making literal meanings of words
represent a "higher" ("third dimension") spiritual meaning
("X" equals "Y").

3) Why is the method of allegorical interpretation wrong?

(1) It has no laws or principles to guide the interpreter.

*You are not bound to rules of grammar to understand a verse.

*You are not bound to the context of the verse you are seeking to understand.

*You are not necessarily bound to check your viewpoint against the rest of Scripture
(NOTE: Some allegorists do attempt to compare Scripture with Scripture, but fail the other two rules of interpretation).

The interpreter who follows this method is generally lawless, rebellious, proud and independent.

(2) It has no checks and balances.

The interpreter's imagination is his own law. The reader's imagination is free to run wild as he "invents" truth rather than discovering it.

What are the basic principles that will guide me to an accurate interpretation of Scripture?

A. Avoid the traps of illegitimate Bible Interpretation

1. Beware of Building a "theological superstructure" on the foundation of only _____ _____ of Scripture.

2. Beware of filtering Scripture through the grid of a dogmatic presupposed _____ or _____.

3. Beware of finding _____ _____ from a passage than is actually there.

B. Follow the rules of legitimate Bible Interpretation

1. Seek the _____ (normal, plain) meaning of the Passage.

(The Literal Principle)

a. Take the Bible for what it says at face value.

1) Seek the natural and obvious meaning of Scripture.

2) Look for the _____ meaning intended by the Author. Ask yourself: "What did this passage mean to the people who first recieved it from an apostle or prophet. Understand the historical, phisical & cultural setting in which the passage was written.

3) Look for the most _____ meaning intended by the Author. What the Bible says and what the Bible means are alwlays the same unless an obvious figure of speech is being used.

4) Seek the _____ meaning intended by the Author. "Every passage of Scripture has only one meaning unless the author says there is another meaning" (McQuilkin, p.66)

_____ _____ the meaning of the text ("exegete") rather than _____ your own idea _____ the text ("eisogete").

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c. Don't allegorize Scripture.

1) What is allegorizing?

It is looking for hidden, "spiritually mystical," "third dimensional" meanings behind what is said.

Rather than taking a word, sentence or paragraph literally, the interpreter imposes his own idea into the text.

Out of pride, the interpreter would say: "The true meaning is not the literal meaning. You are lacking spiritual understanding if you take the Bible literally because even an idiot can see the plain meaning; it takes special spiritual insight to see the "real," "deeper" meaning."

The Roman Catholic Church adopted this method of interpretation from her forefathers Origin and Augustine, and it filtered down to the reformers.

2) Examples of allegorical interpreting:

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(2) Finding types (predicted foreshadowings) in every minutest detail of the Old Testament
[discover types, don't create them]
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c. Don't allegorize Scripture.

1) What is allegorizing?

It is looking for _____, "spiritually mystical," "third dimensional" meanings behind what is said.

Rather than taking a word, sentence or paragraph literally, the interpreter imposes _____ _____ _____ into the text.

Out of pride, the interpreter would say: "The true meaning is not the literal meaning. You are lacking spiritual understanding if you take the Bible literally because even an idiot can see the plain meaning; it takes special spiritual insight to see the "real," "deeper" meaning."

The Roman Catholic Church adopted this method of interpretation from her forefathers _____ and _____ and it was filtered down to the _____.

2) Examples of allegorical interpreting:

(1) Giving _____ value to letters in words.
(2) Finding _____ (predicted foreshadowings) in every minutest detail of the Old Testament
[discover types, don't create them]
(3) Making literal meanings of words _____ a "higher" ("third dimension") spiritual meaning ("X" equals "Y").

3) Why is the method of allegorical interpretation wrong?

(1) It has _____ _____ or principles to guide the interpreter.

In the allegorical method, the interpreter is not bound to basic hermeneutical principles of interpreting.
*You are not bound to rules of _____ to understand a verse.
*You are not bound to the _____ of the verse you are seeking to understand.
*You are not necessarily bound to check your viewpoint against the rest of _

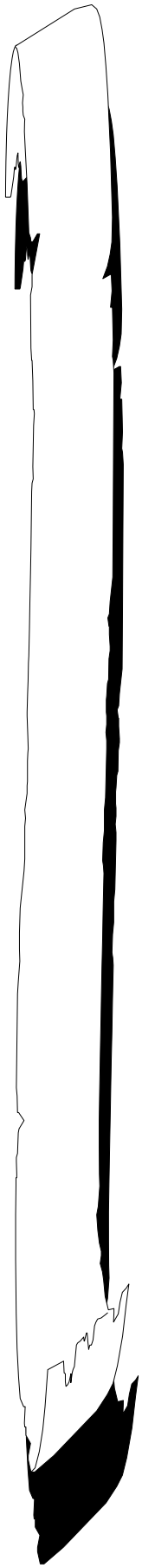
(NOTE: Some allegorists do attempt to compare Scripture with Scripture, but fail the other two rules of interpretation).

(2) It has _____ _____ and _____.

The interpreter's imagination is his own law. The reader's imagination is free to run wild as he "invents" truth rather than discovering it.

2. Understand the context (of the verses you are studying)

(The Contextual Principle)



אבג
of the Bible.
αβγ

This principle is based on the __

The Bible is not a collection or scrapbook of independent, unrelated religious statements. Rather, it is an orderly and harmonious unfolding of God's truth.

1) What does it mean to understand the context?

The interpreter must follow the author's
_____ _____ _____ before the verse (or verses) you are studying and after the verse (or verses) you are studying.

To fully understand a _____, you must understand the sentence which the word is in.

To fully understand a _____, you must understand the paragraph which the sentence is in.

To fully understand a _____, you must understand the book which the paragraph is in.

To fully understand the _____, you must understand the Bible as a whole.

2) What steps do I take in studying the context?

a) Determine where the context (paragraph or unit of thought) begins and ends.

How do we determine this?

(1) Look for the __ (Remember that chapter and

verse divisions are not inspired. They usually are good indications of a change in thought, but not always).

(2) Look for a change in:
(a) _____ (EX: Does the writer shift from the subject of gifts to love? I Cor. 12-13)
(b) _____ (first, second, or third person)

(3) Look for conjunctions or transitional phrases that indicate a shift (EX: "now," "finally," "after these things," "and it came to pass").

b) Determine the major thought or primary idea that is being stressed in the context.

(in other words, always ask yourself: What is the _____ _ that God is emphasizing in this context?)

How do you determine this?

(1) Look for repeated _____ (obvious examples: Love - I Cor. 13; Faith - Heb. 11).

(2) Look for a repeated _____ (EX: I Th. 5:16-18 - be consistent in your inner life with God).

(3) Look for a _____ phrase or sentence which the writer expands on or explains (a knowledge of grammar will help here)

(EX: I Th. 4:3-8 - Paul says, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" in v. 3a; Paul then explains what he means by sanctification in v. 3bff).

3) What is the benefit of studying according to context?

A knowledge of the context of a passage will _____ your interpretation and application of it.

You will _____ _____ on the exact interpretation and you will reduce the possibilities of how it applies.

*Basically, you will avoid misunderstanding and misapplication of God's Word.

Remember, "A text without a context is a pretext" (a pretext is a cover-up or camouflage that allows you to say what you want, while covering up what God said).

3. Consistently follow rules of GRAMMAR (as you study)

(God is the author of language. He chose to use specific languages and the rules within those languages to communicate His truths in a logical consistent manner so that we could understand exactly what He meant by what He said.)

All words have 2 characteristics:
1) _____ (they mean something - they have a vocabulary definition).
2) _____ (they do something - they have a grammatical function).

What determines the meaning of a word?

ANSWER: (1) _____ (etymology)

and (2)

1) **Origin** - When we seek out the origin of a word, we are actually finding out the _____ idea of the word.

To study the origin of a word, it is helpful to find the answer to 2 questions:

(1) _____ did the word _____ _____?

We find this out by tracing the _____ of a word since its earliest recorded occurrence in the language where

it is found; and by tracing its transmission from one language to another.

(2) _____ are the words

2) **Usage** - to fully understand a word and its full meaning, you must understand how it is used.

In doing word studies :

a) Make sure the word you are studying is the same Greek word that you compare it with.

b) Remember that words have various shades of meaning and emphases depending on the context in which they are used.

When studying a passage of Scripture keep these things in mind:

1) Observe who or what is the _____ of the sentence.

2) Carefully note the _____ in the sentence.

Verbs tell us when the action takes place.
(This is called "tense")

Verbs tell us how the action takes place.
(This is called "mood")

Verbs tell us who is doing or receiving the action.
(This is called "voice")

3) Don't overlook the _____ _____ in the sentence.

Like: Conjunctions

(a) Coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, nor) - connect words, phrases, or clauses of equal rank.

EX: "father and son" "Heaven or Hell" "He may be religious but he is still unsaved."

(b) Subordinating conjunctions - (although, because, if, since, that, etc.) - introduce clauses which are subordinate to the rest of the sentence.

EX: "God gave his Son because He loved the world."

4) It is helpful to block the verses you are studying.

To do this look for 2 types of clauses:
Main Clause: a clause that can stand alone or make sense by itself (it is known as an independent or principle clause).
Subordinate Clause: a clause that cannot stand alone but is dependent upon the main clause that it is modifying (describing).

A subordinate clause is usually introduced by either a
1) subordinating conjunction;
2) adverb; or
3) relative pronoun.

(1) Subordinating Conjunctions
(a) Causal clause (because, for - gives a reason for the verb action (Eph. 5:16 - "because")
(b) Conditional clause (if, since, unless, except) (Jn. 3:3 "except")
(c) Purpose or result clause (that, in order that) (I Pet. 3:18 "that")

(2) Adverbial clause (when, whenever, where, as)
(Jer. 29:13 "when"; Jn. 13:15 "as")
(3) Relative clause (who, whom, whose, which)
(Eph. 3:3 "who")

4. COMPARE Scripture with Scripture (as you study)

This principle is based on the unity of the Bible.

(Scripture does not contradict itself, but rather interprets itself. Every major truth in the Bible appears more than once. Therefore, we must check our interpretation with other Scripture to make sure that the principle we discovered does not contradict truths explained elsewhere in the Bible.

1) Methods (ways) of comparing Scripture with Scripture.

a) You can compare words

b) You can compare concepts

c) You can compare doctrines

d) You can compare prophetic quotations, types, and analogies.

Outside of relying upon your memory to cross reference the word or subject you are studying, there are various books available that will aid you in this study. (Examples: cross references in study Bibles; concordances; word study books; theological dictionaries; topical Bibles - "Naves," etc.)

2) Take caution when comparing Scripture with Scripture.

a) Be sure that you first carry out the first 3 rules of hermeneutics before jumping to this one. First:

(1) Seek the obvious (normal, plain) meaning of the passage.
(2) Understand the context of the verse(s) you are studying.
(3) Consistently follow rules of grammar as you study.

b) Be careful not to compare Scripture with Scripture at the expense of the context of each passage.

c) Be careful that the word, concept, or doctrine you are comparing does indeed correspond (match up) with what you are comparing it with.

d) Beware of twisting one part of the Bible to prove a point in some other part of the Bible.

e) Be careful not to force the meaning of one passage into the other.

f) Be careful not to force your ideas into the passage.

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d) Beware of _____ one part of the Bible to prove a point in some other part of the Bible.

e) Be careful not to _____ the meaning of one passage <u>into</u> the other.

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Examples of figures of speech:

(1) Comparisons

(2) Substitutions

(3) Exaggerations

(4) Euphemisms

(5) Understatements

(6) Personifications