

HERMENEUTICS

Taught by
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INTRODUCTION TO HERMENEUTICS

II Tim 2:15

I. WHY IS BIBLE INTERPRETATION IMPORTANT?

1. It is essential for understanding and teaching the Bible properly.
2. Bible interpretation is essential as a step beyond observation.
3. Bible interpretation is essential for applying the Bible properly.

II. THE CHALLENGE OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION

III. PROBLEMS IN BIBLE INTERPRETATION

1. A time gap (chronological)
2. A space gap (geographical)
3. A customs gap (cultural)
4. A language gap (linguistic)
5. A writing gap (literary)
6. A spiritual gap (supernatural)

IV. DEFINITIONS IN HERMENEUTICS

Quote by Bernard Ramm:

The word hermeneutics is ultimately derived from Hermes the Greek god who brought the messages of the gods to the mortals, and the god of science, invention, eloquence, speech, writing, and art.

Hermeneutics is the science and art of Biblical interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill. And not by mechanical imitation.

Hermeneutics is the science and art of interpreting the Bible. Another way to define hermeneutics is this: It is the science (principles) and art (task) by which the meaning of the biblical text is determined.

DEFINITIONS OF HERMENEUTICS AND RELATED TERMS

HERMENEUTICS

The science (principles) and art (task) by which
The meaning of the biblical text is determined.

EXEGESIS

The determination of the meaning of the biblical
Text in its historical and literary contexts

EXPOSITION

The communication of the meaning of the text along
With its relevance to present-day hearers.

HOMILETICS

The science (principles) and art (task) by which
The meaning and relevance of the biblical text
Are communicated in a preaching situation.

V. DIVISIONS OF HERMENEUTICS

The rules of interpretation are divided into four categories: General, Grammatical, Historical, and Theological.

1. *General Principles of Interpretation* are principles that deal with the overall subject of interpretation. They are universal in nature rather than being limited to special considerations, which are listed in the other three sections.
2. *Grammatical Principles of Interpretation* are principles that deal with the text itself. They lay down the ground rules for understanding the words and sentences in the passage under study.
3. *Historical Principles of Interpretation* are principles that deal with the background or context in which the books of the Bible were written. Political, economic, and cultural situations are important in considering the historical aspect of your study of the Word of God.
4. *Theological Principles of Interpretation* are principles that deal with the formation of Christian doctrine. They are, of necessity, "broad" rules, for doctrine must take into consideration all that the Bible says about a given subject.

VI. QUALIFICATIONS FOR INTERPRETATING THE BIBLE

1. No one can fully comprehend the meaning of the Bible unless he/she is regenerated (Born Again). The unsaved person is spiritually blind (2 Cor. 4:4) and dead (Eph 2:2). (1 Cor 2:14)
2. More than regeneration is necessary. Also reverence for and interest in God and His Word are essential to interpreting the Bible properly.
3. Other spiritual qualifications are a prayerful attitude and humility.
4. The Scriptures should also be approached with a willingness to obey them, a willingness to put into practice what has been learned in the Word.
5. The interpreter must also depend upon the Holy Spirit.
 - a. His role does not mean that one's interpretations are infallible. Inerrancy and infallibility are characteristics of the Bible's original manuscripts, but not of the Bible's interpreters.
 - b. The work of the Holy Spirit in interpretation does not mean that He gives some interpreters a "hidden" meaning divergent from the norm, literal meaning of the passage.
 - c. As already suggested, a Christian who is living in sin is susceptible to making inaccurate Bible interpretations because his heart and mind are not in harmony with the Holy Spirit.
 - d. The Holy Spirit guides into all truth (John 16:13). The word "guide" means "to lead the way or guide along the way or road."
 - e. The place of the Holy Spirit in interpreting the Bible means that He does not normally give sudden intuitive flashes of insight into the meaning of scripture. Many passages are readily understood, but the meaning of others may come to light only gradually as the result of careful study.
 - f. The Spirit's role in interpretation means that the Bible was given to be understood by all believers. Its interpretation is not in the hands of an elite few scholars.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

RULE ONE: Work from the assumption that the Bible is authoritative.

Attitudes Towards the Bible

1. **Rationalism:** (a) Extreme form denies the possibility of any supernatural revelation. (b) Moderate form admit possibility of divine revelation, but human mind is final judge of revelation.
2. **Romanism:** The Bible is the product of the church, therefore the Bible is not the sole or final authority.
3. **Mysticism:** Experience is authoritative along with the Bible.
4. **Neo-orthodoxy:** The Bible is a fallible witness to the revelation of God.
5. **Cults:** The Bible and the writings of the particular cult leaders are equally authoritative.
6. **Orthodoxy:** The Bible alone is the ground of authority.

Different views of inspiration.

1. Natural; no supernatural element, the bible was written by men of great genius.
2. Mechanical.
3. Fallible Inspiration; the bible is inspired but not without error.
4. Conceptual; the concepts but not the words are inspired.
5. Inerrant, verbal, plenary inspiration.

RULE TWO: The Bible interprets itself; Scripture best explains Scripture.

1. Let the Bible be its own commentary.
2. The Bible's obscure passages are to be interpreted in light of clear passages.

RULE THREE: Saving faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary for us to understand and properly interpret the Scriptures.

RULE FOUR: Interpret personal experience in light of Scripture and not Scripture in light of personal experience.

RULE FIVE: Biblical examples are authoritative only when supported by a command.

RULE SIX: The primary purpose of the Bible is to change our lives, not increase our knowledge.

RULE SEVEN: Each Christian has the right and responsibility to investigate and interpret the Word of God for himself.

RULE EIGHT: Church history is important but not decisive in the interpretation of Scripture.

GRAMMATICAL PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

RULE ONE: Scripture has only one meaning and should be taken literally.

RULE TWO: Interpret words in harmony with their meaning in the times of the author.

RULE THREE: Interpret a word in relation to its sentence and context.

RULE FOUR: Interpret a passage in harmony with its context.

RULE FIVE: When an inanimate object is used to describe a living being, the statement may be considered figurative.

RULE SIX: When an expression is out of character with the thing described, the statement may be considered figurative.

RULE SEVEN: The principle parts and figures of a parable represent certain realities. Consider only these principal parts and figures when drawing conclusions.

I. Mark 4:1-2

Dodd's definition is that a parable "at its simplest. . . is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to rouse it into active thought.

II. Rules for Interpretation of Parables

1. Determine the purpose of the parable.
2. Make sure you explain the different parts of the parable in accordance with the main design.
3. Don't try to make the parable 'walk on all fours'.
4. The parables were given to illustrate doctrine not to declare it.
5. Validate the main truth of the parable with direct teaching of Scripture.

RULE EIGHT: Interpret the words of the prophets in their usual, literal and historical sense, unless the context or manner in which they are fulfilled clearly indicates they have a symbolic meaning. Their fulfillment may be in installments, each fulfillment being a pledge of that which is to follow.

HISTORICAL PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

The historical principles deal with the historical setting of the text. To whom and by whom was the book written? Why was it written and what role did the historical setting play in shaping the message of the book? What are the customs and surroundings of the people? These are the kinds of questions you try to answer when considering the historical aspect of your study.

As you begin your study of a passage, imagine yourself to be a reporter searching for all the facts. Bombard the text with questions such as:

- * To whom was the letter (book) written?
- * What was the background of the writer?
- * What was the experience or occasion that gave rise to the message?
- * Who are the main characters in the book?

RULE ONE: Since Scripture originated in a historical context, it can be understood only in the light of biblical history.

RULE TWO: Though God's revelation in the Scriptures is progressive, both Old and New Testaments are essential parts of this revelation and form a unit.

RULE THREE: Historical facts or events become types of spiritual truths only if the Scriptures so designate them.

I. Is Typology Justified? Yes, Why?

1. The strong prophetic element in the Old Testament in its relationship with the New Testament.
2. Jesus' use of the Old Testament.
3. The New Testament references.

II. Must Types Be Designated As Such In The New Testament?

III. What Steps Should Be Followed in Interpreting Types?

1. Determine the literal sense of the type.
2. Note the specific point or points of correspondence or resemblance between the type and its antitype.
3. Note the specific areas of contrast or dissimilarity in order to avoid making those elements aspects of the type.
4. Note the direct assertions in the New Testament that verify the typological correspondence.
5. Do not prove doctrine from types unless there is clear New Testament authority.

IV. Which Types Are Valid?

To determine which types are valid in Scripture, we must ask the following questions:

1. Is there a definite correspondence or resemblance between the type and the antitype? Does the type exhibit the same truths, principles, and relationships as the corresponding New Testament reality?
2. Is the antitype in harmony with the historical setting of the type?
3. Is the type a prefiguring or foreshadowing of the antitype, or is it merely an example or illustration? Is there a forward focus in the type which looks ahead to something in the future?
4. Does the antitype heighten or "fulfill" the type, with the antitype being superior to the type?
5. Can divine design be observed in the relationship of the type and the antitype?
6. Does the New Testament in some way designate the type and the antitype?

Given these six criteria, which Old Testament persons, events, or things are types? I would suggest the following 17:

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>SCRIPTURE</u>	<u>ANTITYPE</u>
<u>Persons</u>		
1. Melchizedek	Heb 7:3, 15-17	Christ's perpetual priesthood
2. Aaron	Heb. 5:4-5	Christ's priestly ministry
<u>Events</u>		
3. Passover feast	1 Cor. 5:7	Christ our sacrifice
4. Feast of Un-leavened Bread	1 Cor. 5:7-8	Believer's holy walk
5. Feast of First fruits	1 Cor. 15:20-23	Christ's resurrection a pledge of the believers resurrection
6. Feast of Pentecost	Joel 2:28; Acts 2:1-47	The coming of the Holy Spirit

7. Feast of Trumpets	Matt. 24:21-23	Israel's regathering
8. Day of Atonement	Zech 12:10; Rom. 11:2-27; Heb. 9:19-28	Israel's national conversion by the blood of Christ
9. Feast of Tabernacles	John 7:2, 37-39	God's provision for man's need (with Israel in the kingdom)
10. Sabbath Things	Col. 2:17; Heb 4:3, 9, 11	The Christian's spiritual rest
<u>Things</u>		
11. Tabernacle	Heb 8:5, 9:23-24	Christ, the believer's access to God and basis of fellowship with God
12. Tabernacle curtain	Heb 10:20	Christ, the believer's access to God
13. Burnt offering	Lev. 1; Heb 10:5-7 Eph 5:2	Christ's offering of Himself as the perfect sacrifice
14. Grain offering	Lev 2; Heb 10:8	Christ's offering of Himself as the perfect sacrifice of the highest quality
15. Fellowship offering	Lev 3; Eph 2:14 Col 1:20	Christ's offering of Himself as the basis for fellowship with God
16. Sin offering	Lev. 4:1-5:13; Heb. 13:11-12	Christ's death for the sinner in relation to the guilt of sin
17. Guilt offering	Lev. 5:14-6:7; Heb. 10:12	Christ's death as an atonement for the injury of sin

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

INTRODUCTION: Theology is the study of God and His relation to the world. The source book for this study is the Bible. Theology seeks to draw conclusions on various broad and important topics in the Bible. What is God like? What is the nature of man? What is a proper doctrine of salvation? These are the kinds of subjects with which theology deals. Theological principles are those broad rules that deal with the formation of doctrine. For example, how can we tell if a doctrine is truly biblical?

RULE ONE: You must understand the Bible grammatically before you can understand it theologically.

RULE TWO: A doctrine cannot be considered biblical unless it sums up and includes all that the Scriptures say about it.

RULE THREE: When two doctrines taught in the Bible appear to be contradictory, accept both as scriptural in the confident belief that they resolve themselves into a higher unity.

A number of seeming contradictions or paradoxes exist in the Scriptures. "Seeming" because they really are not. They appear contradictory because the finite mind of man cannot comprehend the infinite mind of God.

Some familiar paradoxes to the human mind are:

1. The Trinity.
2. The dual nature of Christ.
3. The origin and existence of evil.
4. The sovereign election of God and responsibility of man.
5. The main burden of doctrinal teaching must rest on the literal interpretation of the Bible.
6. The main burden of our theology should rest on the teaching of the New Testament.
7. Exegesis is prior to any system of theology.
8. Don't extend our doctrines beyond the Scriptural evidence.
9. No doctrine should be constructed from an uncertain textual reading.

RULE FOUR: A teaching merely implied in Scripture may be considered biblical when a comparison of related passages supports it.