

# **Outline of Biblical Hermeneutics:**

Prologue

Introduction

A brief history of interpretation

The Bible, language and interpretation

The preparation of the interpreter

The Holy Spirit and the interpreter

The meaning of the text

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## Prologue

### Introduction

1. What is hermeneutics?  
The Greek words

The definition: “Hermeneutics is the science that teaches us the principles, laws, and methods of interpretation” (Louis Berkhof).

BB’s definition: “The methodology (principles and practice) of determining the meaning and significance of a text.”

Science:

Art:

2. Why should we study interpretive methods, i.e., hermeneutics?
  - (1)
  - (2)
  - (3)
  - (4)
  - (5)
  - (6) Conclusion:
3. The benefits of studying hermeneutics
  - (1)
  - (2)
  - (3)
  - (4)
4. Starting points for interpretation
  - (1)

- (2)
- (3)
- 5. Hermeneutics, Exegesis and Theology
  - (1) Exegesis
  - (2) Theology
  - (3) Spiral
  - (4) All theological differences and debates come down to hermeneutics.

### **A Brief History of Interpretation**

- I. Jewish Interpretation
  - A. Palestinian Judaism
  - B. Alexandrian Judaism
  - C. The Karaites
  - D. The Kabbalists
  - E. The Spanish Jews
- II. The Early (Patristic) Church
  - A. The school of Alexandria
  - B. The school of Antioch
  - C. The Western (Latin) School

- III. The Medieval Church
  - A. The fourfold sense or method was the accepted hermeneutic
  - B. Tradition became the governor of the method
  
- IV. The Protestant Reformation
  - A. The role of the Renaissance
  - B. Rejection of the fourfold sense
  - C. Acceptance of the “original meaning” as the meaning
  - D. Protestant interpreters
  
- V. The Historico-Critical Period
  - A. Influence of the Enlightenment
  - B. Influence of Darwinism
  - C. Tendencies among higher-critical interpreters
  
- VI. The Postmodern Period
  - A. Language is relative
  - B. Reader-response
  - C. Meta-narratives and deconstruction

## **Some Brief Thoughts on the Bible, Language and Meaning**

- I. The Bible is God's self-revelation to us in *human language*
  
- II. Human language: Uniqueness and Consistency
  - A. The uniqueness of speech communication
  
  - B. Consistency (what it is made of)
  
- III. Human language is *communication* from one person to another person or group of persons
  - A. Ideas are communicated
  
  - B. In order for communication to take place, there must be clarity, not mystery or ambiguity
  
- IV. Meaning: Human and Divine
  - A. The Bible is a book of both human and divine communication
  
  - B. Principles of Meaning
    - 1. What God intended to say He said through the human author.
  
    - 2. Can God say more than what the human author said?
  
    - 3. How can God say more?
  
- V. Interpreting the Mind of God
  - A. Black marks and God's mind
  
  - B. Understanding the mind of God

## **Preparation and Illumination**

- I. The preparation of the interpreter
  - A. The moral and spiritual qualities of the interpreter  
John 7:17  
  
Heb. 5:11-14  
  
1 Cor. 3:1-3
  - B. Sound principles of interpretation  
2 Tim. 2:15
  - C. Desire, Meditation, Prayer and Hard Work
    - a) Desire (Job 23:12; Psa. 19:10; 119:11, 14, 16, 24, 35, 36, 47, 48, 72, 77, 103, 111, 127, 128, 131, 174; 1Pet. 2:2).
    - b) Meditation (Josh. 1:8; Psa. 1:1-2; 119:97)
    - c) Prayer and hard work (Psa. 119:18; Prov. 2:1-5; 16:20 23:23; 2 Tim. 2:15)
  - D. The provision of teachers  
Eph. 4:11-13
  - E. Basic tools
- II. The Holy Spirit and illumination
  - A. Definition of Illumination  
*The Holy Spirit, the author of Scripture and resident in every believer, aids the believer in loving, pursuing, understanding and obeying the Truth of the Word.*
  - B. The Means of Illumination
    1. The clarity of Scripture

2. The direct ministry of the Holy Spirit  
Jn. 14:26

Jn. 16:13

1 Cor. 2:12-14

Eph. 1:18-19

Col. 1:9

1 Jn. 2:20, 27

C. Convergence: preparation and illumination

1. It is the preparation and hard work of the interpreter.

2. It is reliance on the Spirit and the illumination of the Spirit.

## **Grammatical-Historical Interpretation**

### **I. Introduction: grammatical-historical interpretation**

- A. Definition: *Let the Reader Understand*, 120
  
- B. Goal: To understand the viable interpretive options and choose the one that best explains the most and presents the fewest problems.
  
- C. A note about “literal interpretation.”

### **II. The interpreter as investigator**

The interpreter is to observe the text

- A. Preliminary principles of observation
  - (1) Beware of preconceptions. Observe what biblical texts actually say (Dorioni).
  
  - (2) Observation precedes explanation. As explanation precedes make sure it fits your observations (Dorioni).
  
  - (3) Resist reshaping your observations so that they support your preferred theology (Dorioni).
  
  - (4) Make notes of any details that are striking for any reason (Dorioni).
  
- B. The interpreter as inquirer of the text
  
- C. Questions/ Observations



### **III. Background study**

A. Purpose: to discover the author's horizon/world

B. Resources for background

C. Genre/Literary Context

1. Genre is literary type

2. Examples

Poetic literature

Prophetic literature

D. Resources for genre and literary contexts

#### IV. Textual study

##### A. Contextual study

1. Definition: Context (*con* = together; *textus*=woven)  
“Hence when we speak of the context, we are talking about the connection of thought that runs through a passage, those links that weave it into one piece” (Kaiser, 71).
2. Historical context
3. Sectional context
4. Book context
5. Canonical and Redemptive-Historical context

##### B. Word studies

D.A. Carson’s *Exegetical Fallacies* is must reading!  
Also recommended, Moises Silva’s *Biblical Words and their Meaning*

1. Word study fallacies
  - a. The **root** fallacy
  - b. Semantic **anachronism**
  - c. Semantic **obsolescence**
  - d. Appeal to **unknown** or **unlikely** meanings
  - e. False assumptions about **technical** meaning
  - f. Unwarranted semantic **disjunctions**
  - g. **Illegitimate totality transfer**

2. Proper word study procedures
  - a. Identifying the words to study
  - b. Use a standard Lexicon to determine field of meaning
  - c. OT/non-biblical background:
  - d. Using a concordance, look up all NT references
  - e. Meaning is determined by author's usage
  - f. Look in context for parallels and clues to meaning
  - g. Look for parallel passages
  - h. Look for conceptual/thematic parallels
  - i. Immediate context always has priority



## **Apostolic Exegesis: How the NT Interprets the OT**

### **The hermeneutical issues**

- 1) Jesus and the Apostles (inc all the NT writers) practice hermeneutics.
- 2) As we look at many if not all of these NT interpretations of the OT they seem “odd” to us.
- 3) The question has been put like this: Did Jesus and the Apostles teach the right doctrine from the wrong text?
- 4) In its more sophisticated and conservative form, the affirmative answer goes like this: The NT writers used Jewish methods of interpretation which go beyond grammatical-historical exegesis. These interpretations are revelation, thus authoritative, but they are not hermeneutically sound and thus not reproducible.
- 5) Others have argued that although the NT writers certainly have a perspective on the OT that seems different than ours, they do not violate the meaning of the OT and actually give us not only the inspired meaning of the OT but also provide for us an interpretative pattern that can be and should be reproduced.
- 6) The OT writers had a greater understanding of things to come than we have usually granted.

“Why then do evangelical continue to produce so many excellent textbooks and studies on hermeneutics, with yet hardly a word on how students should learn biblical interpretation from the practice of the apostles? Why do we still often speak of the NT ‘use’ of the OT? Those NT writers do not see themselves as only ‘using’ or ‘applying’ the separate meaning of the OT for their new circumstances. They proclaimed what it means. That meaning was what the Lord himself had explained to them (Lk. 24:27) and opened their minds to understand (v. 45) concerning himself. It was the meaning which was in all the Scriptures (v. 27), and which must find its fulfillment in him (v. 44). Dare we say that we have not been foolish and slow of heart to believe it?” Scott Swanson, *Trinity Journal* 17NS (1996) 75-76.

### **Building the Case for Apostolic Hermeneutics**

1. The OT interprets itself
  - (1) The physical/visible was never the ultimate in the OT’s understanding of itself.

*\*\*Spiritual realities underlie the physical/visible*

- (2) OT salvation is eschatological and typological

*\*\*OT events form the basis for future redemptive events.  
The OT interprets itself typologically.*

“The OT itself therefore leads us to expect that between every redemptive type embedded in the Israel’s earlier history, on the one hand, and its NT antitype-fulfillment on the other, there will be both continuity and discontinuity, correspondence and heightening.” (Dennis Johnson, Westminster Seminary, 1994, 37).

2. Jesus interprets the OT Christ-centrally
  
3. Jesus taught the Apostles to interpret the OT
  
4. Apostolic hermeneutics are Christ-centered
  
5. Apostolic hermeneutics are covenantal

**Conclusion:** The way the NT interprets the OT gives us the framework to see the organic unity between the testaments. It is not only the way Christ and the Apostles interpreted the OT, it is the way the OT interpreted itself, thus we have an inspired interpretive pattern which we must follow.

### **A Brief Bibliography**

Beale, Greg. Editor. *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text?* (Baker).  
Vos, Geerhardus. *Biblical Theology* (Eerdmans or Banner of Truth).  
Goldsworthy, Graeme. *According to Plan* (IVP).  
Léon-Dufour, Xavier. Editor. *Dictionary for Biblical Theology* (Seabury).  
New Dictionary of Biblical Theology (IVP).

## **The Final Stage of Interpretation: Application**

(Recommend: Daniel Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: the Theory and Practice of Biblical Application; Getting the Message*, chs. 9-10 and Appendix D)

***“Apply yourself totally to the text; apply the text totally to yourself.”***

***Johannes Albrecht Bengel***

### **I. Application: Definition and Necessity**

- A. Application is when a believer takes a truth (wide category) and works out the practical implications of that truth for their life (thinking, feeling, conduct)
- B. The Biblical necessity of application:

### **II. Prerequisite and Goal of Application**

- A. The prerequisite of application is correct understanding (i.e., interpretation) of the truth (i.e., text).
- B. The goal of application: knowing God and conforming ourselves to Him

### **III. The challenge of application**

- A. Our hermeneutics and our theology often shape our hermeneutics.
- B. Some application is *fairly* straightforward
- C. Other application seems non-existent
- D. Some act as if application is automatic
- E. Some act as if application simply consists in giving a list of activities.
- F. Some believe that all attempts at application are man-centered, legalistic and moralistic.
- G. Often our application (in sermons especially) become stale and repetitive.

#### **IV. How application works**

- A. Once a text has been properly understood, ask yourself what obligation/impact this passage or truth places upon your thinking, your affections, your conduct.

What does this passage teach me about God?  
What does this passage teach me about me?  
Is there a command or prohibition to obeyed?  
An example to followed or avoided?  
Is there a truth to believed?  
Is there a promise or a threat to be trusted?  
Is there instruction in worship or prayer?

- B. Many times, the obligations may be slow in coming.

- a) determine the original meaning
- b) find the underlying principle
- c) apply the principle to a similar situation today
- d) test it, if possible, with other passages

- C. Always maintain a redemptive context to the obligations, always maintain a focus on Christ.

- D. Be realistic with application and understand that the writers often do not give us the mechanics, etc.

#### **V. Conclusion**