

# **Biblical Hermeneutics: The Science and Art of Biblical Interpretation**

Keep your handouts, there will be a lot of notes and we don't want to waste paper!  
I will handout 1-2 lectures at a time, a lecture may last more than one evening.

## **Prologue**

Hermeneutics are a daily requirement! When senators argue over a Supreme Court Justice Nominee's approach to the Constitution, and whether they see it as a living document or are strict constructionists, that is a hermeneutical issue. When American Literature classes debate the meaning of Mark Twain, it is a matter of hermeneutics.

When we read the newspaper or World magazine, we are employing standards of hermeneutics.

When you read a poem or a contract, you are practicing hermeneutics! When Dave makes a legal decision based on precedents, it is a matter of hermeneutics. So, says the skeptic, I can read e.e. cummings and Escrow papers and the Bible, so why do I need a class in hermeneutics?

"What matters, we might say, is learning to 'transpose' our customary interpretive routines to our reading of the Bible. Yet there precisely is where our problems begin" (Silva, 17).

The Bible presents us with divinely inspired literature which is

- Ancient literature
- Different languages (grammar and syntax)
- Various historical settings
- Cultural practices
- Various genres, literary devices, discourse structures, figures of speech

All theological differences and debates come down to hermeneutics.

- (1) divergence of hermeneutical principles
- (2) misapplication of hermeneutical principles
- (3) differing opinions of hermeneutical evidence and weight in deciding the meaning of a passage or point of theology

In one sense the Bible is very clear, in another sense, interpreting Scripture can be very complicated. Hermeneutics functions both in the clear and the complex.

## **Introduction**

1. What is hermeneutics?

The Greek words: *e`rmhneuw*, to explain, to interpret (Jn. 1:38, 42; 9:7; Heb. 7:2); *e`rmhnia*, interpretation (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:26); *e`rmhneuthj*, interpreter (Gen. 42:23; 1 Cor. 14:28).

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."

Hermeneutics is not complete until contemporary significance, or application is made (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6)

Science – the formulation of principles and practices, use of methods, laws  
Art – requires judgment, sensitivity, skill,

2. Why should we study interpretive methods, i.e., hermeneutics?  
Some Christians assume that no interpretive method is necessary because "the Holy Spirit interprets the text for me."  
Radmacher story
  - (1) But the Bible clearly states that Christ has given teachers to the church (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; Rom. 12:7).  
What is the role of a teacher? Explanation, application of truth
  - (2) The Prophets interpreted and applied the Pentateuch
  - (3) Christ Himself interpreted the Scriptures to His disciples (Lk 24:25-27, 45).
  - (4) The Holy Spirit also performs a hermeneutical function (Jn. 16:13)
  - (5) The Apostles interpreted the OT and the words and works of Christ
  - (6) Conclusion: The Holy Spirit motivates us to diligent effort, not relaxation, quietism, passivity as we study the Word of God.  
2 Tim. 2:15
3. The benefits of studying hermeneutics
  - (1) It increases our ability to accurately understand the Word  
We are prone to misunderstand the meaning of Scripture.  
When we better understand the Word, we better know God.
  - (2) It enables us to more accurately apply the Word and thus obey the Word.  
We are prone to misapply the Scripture.  
\*\*I suggest that this is the ultimate goal of hermeneutics: a better understanding of and obedience to the Word.
  - (3) It helps us to discern true and false teaching  
Although this is a function of the Holy Spirit, it is not without means. Examples: prototokos, Isa. 53:5;
  - (4) It equips us to better teach the Word, no matter what our sphere of influence.

Sunday School, Bible studies, personal devotions, family worship, helping a new believer, helping a confused believer, etc.

A word about books on hermeneutics: Doriani, McCartney and Clayton, Berkhof, Poythress, Bray

A word about optional exercises:

4. Starting points for interpretation
  - (1) The Triune God's Lordship over all things, including knowledge  
The fallacy is that man is the measure of all things.  
God is the measure of all things.  
God is Lord of knowledge, and God's Word is the inspired, inerrant, authoritative and sufficient revelation of Himself.  
Thus when we come to the Bible to interpret and understand, we must come with our reason in submission to God.  
Col. 2:3; 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Col. 1:9; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Matt. 22:37  
Reason can never be autonomous – *Let the Reader*, 8-9
  - (2) Man is fallen and limited, sinful and finite.  
Our minds are affected by our sin, and bad interpretation is the result!  
"Interpretation would not be a problem for us, were it not for our sin" (*Let the Reader*, 28).  
We must aware of our presuppositions and limitations.  
This will make us committed to the spiral process of conforming our presuppositions to the Word of God. – *Let the Reader*, 10
  - (3) Because of these truths biblical interpretation requires humility before God, submission to God and dependence on the Holy Spirit.
5. Hermeneutics, Exegesis and Theology
  - (1) Exegesis is the grammatical, syntactical, lexical and contextual analysis of a passage (preferably in the original language) and applying the principles of hermeneutics in drawing out the meaning of the author.
  - (2) Theology is taking the Scriptures and looking at them categorically or topically, collating, systematizing what the Bible says about any given subject.
  - (3) There is interrelatedness between the disciplines and a spiral which develops and reciprocally shapes our understanding.
    - >hermeneutics
      - >exegesis
        - >biblical theology
          - >systematic theology

- (4) All theological differences and debates come down to hermeneutics.
- (a) divergence of hermeneutical principles  
covenant theology v dispensationalism  
Liberalism - demythologizing
  - (b) misapplication of hermeneutical principles  
open theism  
hyper-pentecostalism  
Proverbs as promises
  - (c) differing opinions of hermeneutical evidence and weight in deciding the meaning of a passage or point of theology  
paedo-baptism v credo-baptism  
Calvinism and Arminianism

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

- I. Jewish Interpretation
  - A. Palestinian Judaism
    - Peshat – the plain meaning of the text
    - Midrash – Rabbinic commentary on OT
      - Halakhah – teaching/application based on the Law
      - Haggadah – teaching/application based on rest of OT
      - Casuistic – detailed commands and prohibitions based on both written and oral Torah
  - B. Alexandrian Judaism
    - Platonists
    - Nothing unworthy of God is to be believed
    - Allegorize portions of OT that
      - Are unworthy of God
      - Are identified by allegory markers
  - C. The Karaites (people of the Scripture)
    - 9<sup>th</sup> century Jews
    - The producers of the Masoretic Text
    - Sole authority of the written Word (rejected oral tradition)
    - Careful exegesis of the Hebrew text, literal interpretation of Scripture apart from Rabbinic tradition.
  - D. The Kabbalists
    - 12<sup>th</sup> century mystical movement which “deified” the letters, verses, vowel points, accents, etc. (the prototypes for the Bible-Code nuts).
    - The Zohar is the chief “commentary” of Kabbalah
    - Gematria – numerology, assigning each letter a numeric value.
    - Numerical equivalence is not a coincident, rather each letter has a creative force.

Notarikon – the letters of a word are used for other words, making up words within words.

Temurah – rearranging the letters in a word to make a new word.

- E. The Spanish Jews  
12-15<sup>th</sup> century Jews in Spain, recovered Hebrew text, emphasized literal interpretation.  
Many learned Rabbis who would assist many early Protestant Hebrew scholars.
  
- II. The Early (Patristic) Church
  - A. The school of Alexandria  
Heavily influenced by Platonic, Neo-platonic and even gnostic philosophies, also influenced by Philo.  
Heavily allegorical.  
Clement of Alexandria and Origen were the chief “interpreters”  
  
Layers of interpretation: the literal meaning only leads to the elementary level of the faith; the allegorical meaning leads to true spiritual knowledge.  
Likened to Body, soul and spirit = body (literal meaning), the soul (the moral meaning) and the spirit (allegorical)
  
  - B. The school of Antioch  
Conscientious rejection of the allegorical method. Rigorously sought to exegete the Bible and bring out the original meaning of the text.  
  
John Chrysostom was the best representative of this school. The Cappodocian fathers also belonged to this school.
  
  - C. The Western (Latin) School  
Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome represented this school of interpretation.  
The fourfold sense of Scripture:  
The **literal sense** of Scripture is the meaning conveyed by the words, discovered through sound interpretation. All other senses of Scripture are based on the literal. This literal sense accurately describes what took place. It also points us to deeper spiritual meanings.  
  
The **allegorical sense**, especially of the Old Testament, signifies a foreshadowing or "type" that will be fulfilled by Christ in the New Testament. That is, the Old Testament event points us to something Jesus did or made clear in the New Testament.

The **moral sense** of the Old Testament is recorded for our instruction. It moves the Christian to act justly in the life of the Church by indicating to us what ought to be done.

The **heavenly sense** of the Old Testament leads us towards heaven and our fulfillment in heaven in the way that it tells us about the coming of Jesus.

Bray provides a case study from Gen 1 with the various school's interpretative distinctives represented (Bray, 115-127).

### III. The Medieval Church

- A. The fourfold sense or method was the accepted hermeneutic
- B. Tradition became the governor of the method  
"The interpretation of the Bible had to adapt itself to tradition and to the doctrine of the church" (Berkhof).

There really weren't any advances in understanding Scripture or developing a more biblical hermeneutic. "Exegesis was bound hand and foot by traditional lore and by the tradition of the church" (Berkhof).

Thomas Aquinas, although maintaining the church as the authoritative interpreter, did make an important qualifier: Let the Reader, 90-91

### IV. The Protestant Reformation

- A. The role of the Renaissance
  - 1. To the sources
- B. Rejection of the fourfold sense
  - 1. Literal (ordinary) meaning is the meaning
- C. Acceptance of the "original meaning" as the meaning
  - 1. Scripture interprets Scripture
  - 2. The analogy of the faith – Scripture does not contradict Scripture
  - 3. Grammatical-historical exegesis
  - 4. Reason is subject to Scripture
- D. Protestant interpreters
  - 1. Luther – better in theory than practice
  - 2. Calvin – the greatest exegete of the Reformation

- V. The Historico-Critical Period
  - A. Influence of the Enlightenment
    - 1. Rationalism
    - 2. Anti-supernaturalism
  - B. Influence of Darwinism
    - 1. Source criticism – religion develops, evolves; Wellhausen theory
    - 2. Historical criticism – everything gets reconstructed then interpreted in light of the reconstruction  
F.C Baur and the Tubingen School  
Freidrich Schleiermacher  
Rudolph Bultmann
  - C. Tendancies among higher-critical interpreters
    - 1. Because they deny the supernatural inspiration of Scripture, their goal in interpretation is faulty.
    - 2. Because of their liberal presuppositions, most of the books of the Bible are written much later than supposed, under very different circumstances than stated, and for very different reasons than stated.
    - 3. Because of their commitment to source criticism, often they are more interested in seeing what tradition a text came from than its actual meaning.  
“Why did the church make up this story? How did the church use this story?”
- VI. The Postmodern Period
  - A. Language is relative  
Truth is relative, language cannot express propositional absolutes; it is inadequate to accurately convey thought or objective reality; the relativity in language resides in both the speaker/writer and the listener/reader.
  - B. Reader-response  
This relativity and inadequacy of language translates into: Meaning resides in the reader, not the text.  
(Gadamer, Wittgenstein, etc – the new hermeneutic)
  - C. Meta-narratives and deconstruction  
A meta-narrative is the narrative scheme which explains and justifies knowledge and experience.  
Language comes in multi-layered structures and metanarratives (capitalist, male, hierarchical, western European, Christian, Freudian, Marxist, etc, etc.).

Jacques Derrida; Jean-Francois Lyotard; Richard Rorty; Foucault  
The post-modernist wants to deconstruct the structures of literature  
or language, and expose the meta-narratives.

This is a self-refuting system and pure intellectual idiocy!  
Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 102-103

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

- I. The Bible is God's self-revelation to us in *human language*  
We spent 22 weeks on Bibliology, the doctrine of Scripture.
  
- II. Human language: Uniqueness and Consistency
  - A. The uniqueness of speech communication
    1. Unique to humanity  
Noam Chomsky, When we study human language, we are approaching what some might call the 'human essence,' the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man."
  
    2. Reflection of the image of God  
God speaks, He has a voice, He uses words, His word is His creative power, redeeming power, sustaining power, commanding authority, communicates Himself.  
Psa 68:33; 147:15-20
  
  - B. Consistency (what it is made of)
    1. Sounds or symbols (verbal or written)
    2. Grammar – forms, parts of speech,
    3. Syntax – functions within the sentence, the relationship of the parts to each other
    4. Semantics
    5. Idioms and figures of speech
    6. Paragraphs
    7. Discourse units
    8. Literary devices
    9. Genres  
== thoughts/ideas
  
- III. Human language is *communication* from one person to another person or group of persons
  - A. What are communicated is ideas  
Gordon Clark, 152
  
  - B. In order for communication to take place, there must be clarity, not mystery or ambiguity



Sometimes there are riddles, metaphors, difficult structures, or indirect statements that convey meaning, but more effort is required. Still, the basics of communication are in tact.

Judges 14

Prov. 1:1-6

“It is chili in here” may mean “please shut the window”

#### IV. Meaning: Human and Divine

##### A. The Bible is a book of both human and divine communication

1. The human author communicates meaning (author, audience, situation)
2. God communicates meaning (author, audience, situation)

##### B. Principles of Meaning

1. What God intended to say He said through a human author. I.e, the divine meaning is the human meaning. This does not mean that the divine and human meaning is collapsed into one.
2. Can God say more than what the human author said? Yes, but God does not say more through a human author in a way that is detached from the human author’s meaning.
3. How can God say more? God as author has His audience, which is wider than the original. God has larger contexts:  
Progressive revelation (unity of author=unity of Bible)  
Redemptive-history  
Christological fulfillment  
Canonical context

When Isaiah writes, God speaks through Isaiah and has a *fuller, deeper* meaning that is *not contrary* to Isaiah’s original meaning, but *consistent and complementary* in its widening contexts.

The Divine meaning also includes valid implications and applications to other generations.

Mk. 7:6

Poythress, 103

Examples:

Ezek. 34 (immediate historical context > in light of Moses and the Prophets up to that time > NT, Jn 9-10)

Psa 22 (Poythress)

- V. Interpreting the Mind of God
  - A. Black marks and God's mind
 

The black marks on the pages of our Bibles represent words, which represent thought, which represents ideas, truth, or to put it another way, the mind of God.

They are God's thoughts expressed in words! (1 Cor. 2:6-16)
  - B. Understanding the mind of God
 

If we are to objectively (as much as possible) understand the mind of God, then we must try to understand the words as they fit into sentences as they fit into paragraphs as they fit into units of discourse as they fit into genres as they fit into redemptive-history, the canon and categories of truth. This is the fundamental task of hermeneutics!

### **Preparation and Illumination**

- I. The preparation of the interpreter
  - A. The moral and spiritual qualities of the interpreter
    1. A predisposition to obey the will of God (John 7:17)
 

It gives insight, discernment and understanding into the Word.
    2. Being open and quick to hear truth and practicing the truth increases one's understanding (Heb. 5:11-14)
    3. Carnality, unrepented sin hinder spiritual understanding (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Putting aside such sins prepares us to desire and receive the Word (1 Pet. 2:1-3; Jas. 1:21).
  - B. Sound principles of interpretation
 

2 Tim. 2:15

The principles of being a workman who is going to accurately apply his trade is apt picture – he must know the task, the goal, must have the tools.
  - C. Desire, Meditation, Prayer and Hard Work
    1. 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).
    2. Meditation (Josh. 1:8; Psa. 1:1-2; 119:97)
    3. Prayer and hard work (Psa. 119:18; Prov. 2:1-5; 16:20 23:23; 2 Tim. 2:15)

We cannot simply say prayer, “pneumatic” exegesis, which relies mystically on prayer can be dangerous. Prayer and hard work.

- D. The provision of teachers  
Eph. 4:11-13  
Interpretation is not done on an island or in a vacuum. It takes place in community and through history. To ignore Christ’s gifts to the church in the past or present is to be guilty of despising Christ’s headship over the Church and the Spirit’s presence and gifting in the church.
- E. Basic tools  
(What might those tools be?)

### **The Holy Spirit and illumination**

- I. 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.*  
**\*\*A cognitive and experiential perception of the Word, both truth and power.**
- II. The Means of Illumination  
Assuming the whole of point I.
  - A. The clarity of Scripture
    - 1) Clarity does not mean that the Bible in all of its parts is equally understandable (2 Pet. 3:16)
    - 2) Clarity does mean that the Bible was generally written in such a way that the main message is understandable by all believers.  
Psa. 19:7; 119:130
    - 3) Clarity does not rule out the need for the Holy Spirit, but rather emphasizes His role in the way the Scriptures were inspired.
  - B. 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 – the *chrisma* can be a reference to the Spirit or the Word, or perhaps both. Any of the options still prove the point.

Perhaps the heretics were fond of this word as they sought to teach their heresies.

\*the anointing is the Spirit-taught Word of God as it is received by believers who have the Holy Spirit.

\*abiding in the anointing is parallel to abiding in the Word (2:14, 24; 2 Jn. 2)

Marshall, 155

### III. The mechanics of illumination

When the Holy Spirit illuminates the Word to us He does the following:

He motivates us to love and pursue the Word as our source of wisdom and power. He gives us the hunger, the drive, the incentive.

He empowers us to have insight, understanding of the Word

He enables us to gain wisdom from the Word, seeing how the Word applies to us.

He enlivens us to obey the Word.

*2 Tim. 3:16*

\*\*\*the Spirit then gives us cognitive understanding into the meaning of the Word, but He also opens our hearts, minds, affections to experience the power of the Word to change us.

A cognitive and experiential perception of the Word, both truth and power.

Manifests itself in knowing God better, trusting God more, relying on His promises, having more wisdom in life, a biblical worldview, biblical thinking, biblical living.

### IV. Convergence: preparation and illumination

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

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

C. The unction of the Spirit in preaching is an example of this convergence.

(Applicable to hearing the Word also)

## **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.”
  - 1. What do we mean by “literal”?
  - 2. Not: face value sense, letteralism, non-figurative, not even “literal wherever possible.” A naïve approach!
  - 3. Literal as opposed to mythical, true as opposed to false, historical as opposed to non-historical.
  - 4. Literal in the sense of the normal or ordinary sense as required by context.

\*overall it is an unhelpful term because of confusion w/ face-value, non-figurative.

### **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 (Doriani).  
E.g., Matt. 11:1-6; 26:36-44; Rom. 7:14-25
  - (2) Observation precedes explanation. As explanation precedes make sure it fits your observations (Doriani).
  - (3) Resist reshaping your observations so that they support your preferred theology (Doriani, pg 17).
  - (4) Make notes of any details that are striking for any reason (Doriani).  
(My practice)  
Pronouns, vocabulary choices, story details (Acts), verb tenses, grammatical structures, cultural details (Jn 4; Lk 10),
- B. The interpreter as inquirer of the text  
The interpreter is to ask questions of (query) the text  
What does this mean? Why is it here? How does it fit?  
Pose problems! Badger the Author!  
Piper, 76
- C. Questions/ Observations

What is the main theme of the book?  
 What is the argument? What are the divisions?  
 What issues/themes are repeated?  
 Who is the author? Who is the audience?  
 What is the circumstance for writing?  
 Are there thematic or purpose verses? (John 20:31; 1 Jn. 5:13; Jude 3; Luke 1:1-4; Heb. 13:21)  
 Why is this verse, paragraph, chapter here? How does it fit?

### **III. Background study**

- A. Purpose: to discover the author's horizon/world  
 The interpreter is attempting to gain as much familiarity with the book as possible.  
 This provides a historical and cultural background that helps provide an interpretive setting for the book as a whole.
  - 1. What kind of place was Ephesus?
  - 2. What is known about its culture/religion?
  - 3. What were the circumstances in Ephesus and its environment at the time of writing?
  
- B. Resources for background
  - 1. The Bible itself
  - 2. Bible Dictionaries/Encyclopedias/handbooks
  - 3. Commentaries
  - 4. Introductions and others
  
- C. Genre/Literary Context
  - 1. Genre is literary type  
 It is absolutely critical to have an understanding of the literary type, genre will serve as a major interpretive influence.
  
  - 2. Examples  
 Hebrew poetry and wisdom literature  
     Psalms, Proverbs (How to Read Job)  
 Prophetic literature
  
- E. 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  
Authorship, date, readers, theme, purpose  
Situation (E.g., Book of Judges)
3. Sectional context  
Paragraph  
Unit (Mt. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1)
4. Book context  
An outline of the book, relationship between sections
5. Canonical and Redemptive-Historical context

Principles of context: Details are viewed in light of 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  
The meaning of a word is tied up in its “root”, its component parts or etymology.  
Nice –  
Goodbye-  
Butterfly-  
Pineapple-

The root meaning of agape is God-kind of love.

2 Sam. 13:15; 2 Tim. 4:10

The root meaning of ekklesia

- b. Semantic **anachronism**

This is when a late use of a word is read back into earlier literature. An example is the Greek word *dunamis*, from which we derive our English term “dynamite.” Semantic anachronism would be

interpreting the meaning of the first century Greek word by an appeal to the meaning of the twentieth century English word.

Cf. also 2 Cor. 9:7.

c. Semantic **obsolescence**

This is when the interpreter assigns to a word a meaning that it had in earlier times but that is no longer within the semantic range of the term. [The *semantic range* of a word is a list of the ways the word was used in the period when the author was writing.]

d. Appeal to **unknown** or **unlikely** meanings  
Cf. *kephale* (head) in 1 Cor. 11:2-16.

e. False assumptions about **technical** meaning

Here the interpreter falsely assumes that a word always or nearly always has a certain technical or theologically immutable meaning.

f. **Unwarranted semantic disjunctions**

This refers to the tendency to "offer the reader either/or alternatives and then force a decision. In other words, they demand semantic disjunction, when complementarity might be a possibility" (Carson, pp. 55-6).

g. **Illegitimate totality transfer**

This fallacy is found in the idea that the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context itself allows and may entail the entire range of a word's meaning. Or, this fallacy "assumes that a word carries all of its senses in any one passage" (Darrell Bock, in *Introducing NT Interpretation*, p. 110).

The *Amplified Bible* is often guilty of this fallacy in its attempt to provide us with an expansive paraphrase of the text.

2. Proper word study procedures
  - a. Identifying the words to study



theologically significant words  
words that affect the meaning of the passage  
repeated words, rare words  
divergent Eng translations  
\*not all words need to be researched and  
sometimes preliminary examinations rule out  
further examination.  
-- use the sample texts

- b. Use a standard Lexicon to determine field of meaning (note: noun/verbs)
- c. OT/non-biblical background:  
LXX (*ekklesia/qahal*)  
non-biblical (Moulton and Milligan); the NT
- 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  
Ex *saproj* in Eph. 4:29

\*thematic word studies (you cannot find the meaning of a word apart from its context [i.e., *sarx*] but you can find the meaning of a word in its context.

\*at times, a word/theme study can help develop a biblical concept/doctrine, e.g., self-denial, humility

\*How to do that: determine the word and the broader conceptual/thematic range: self-discipline, self-control, etc.

\*determine nouns, verbs, etc

\*Look up various uses

\*What is developed is NOT THE meaning of "self-denial" but a biblical doctrine about self-denial.

C. Figures of Speech (Bullinger's *Figures of Speech in the Bible*)  
Sometimes figures of speech are deliberate literary devices, other times they are simply communication conventions.

1. Similies – a comparative figure, likening one thing to another, using “like” or “as.”  
Prov. 1:27; Matt. 23:27
2. Metaphors – a straightforward comparative figure, without using “like” or “as.”  
Matt. 5:13; Phil. 3:2  
\*when using comparative figures, the difficulty is determining in what respect or respects the analogy applies.
3. Symbol – less straightforward figure, numbers, colors, other objects. Common in apocalyptic lit.
4. Metonymy – one object is substituted for another because of a mental relationship or association.  
“Don’t mess with the government.”  
The White House said today. . .  
The Crown had lost its power. . .  
“They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them” (Lk. 16:29)  
Rom. 13:4  
Acts 2:38
5. Synecdoche – the name of thing is substituted for another based on a part to whole or whole to part association.  
“Nice wheels.” We drove longhorns all day.  
Soul – the person; flesh – the person;  
Prov. 1:16  
Bread – food;  
  
Merismus: combination of the parts stand for the whole or totality.  
Heave and earth; sea and sky; Psa. 139:2; 113:3
6. Personification – inanimate/abstract things are spoken of as if they were persons.  
The earth, trees, mountains, sin, wisdom (Prov. 1; 8)
7. Hyperbole – rhetorical device of exaggeration or overstatement for effect.

Psa. 6:6; Amos 3:7; Jn. 21:25; Matt. 5:29-30

Litotes – an understatement for effect or emphasis

Opp of hyperbole

“That’ll leave a mark.” “Not bad.”

Psa. 51:17; Rom. 1:16

Irony – stating one thing while meaning the opposite

Job 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 4:8

8. Hendiadys – a single idea is expressed by two nouns (or more) for amplification and force.

2 Chron. 7:10

9. Anthromorphisms (2 Chron. 6:14-15, 40)

Zoomorphisms

Anthropopathisms

\*\*Relationship to open theism

#### D. Grammar

1. Identifying the parts of speech  
We need to read grammatically
  - a) Hebrew and Greek grammar
  - b) Basic English grammar
  - c) Good English translations (NASB, NKJV, ESV)  
E.g., 1 Pet. 5:6-7
2. Showing the relationships between the parts of speech
  - (a) Diagrams and phrasing
  - (b) Outlining (grammatical/exegetical  
expository/homiletical)

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

### **The hermeneutical issues**

- 1) Jesus and the Apostles (inc all the NT writers) practice hermeneutics. They all “interpreted the OT.”
- 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? Did the Apostles (and Jesus) misinterpret the OT?
- 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.  
1 Pet. 1:10-12  
Acts 2:30-31  
Heb. 11:17-19  
Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11 (written with eschatology in view! So that those texts do not just address us “by way of application” but their true meaning and intent find its completion in “us.”  
Again, the NT writers give us not only the inspired meaning of the OT, but a valid hermeneutic for understanding the Scriptures.

“Why then do evangelicals 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. There is a spiritual depth that is implied and taught all the way through the OT.  
The Tabernacle as the dwelling of God >> 1 Kgs. 8:27ff  
Sacrifices >> 1 Sam. 15:22; Psa. 51:16-17; Isa. 53  
Circumcision >> Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 9:25-26  
Healing >> the ultimate restoration (Isa. 35; 42:6-7, 16-20)  
*\*\*Spiritual realities underlie the physical/visible*

- (2) OT salvation is eschatological and typological  
Salvation is a new Exodus (Hos. 2:14-15)  
Salvation is a new creation (Isa. 65)  
Salvation is the revived reign of David (Ezek 34)  
Salvation is a new covenant (Jer. 31)  
Salvation is a new Eden (Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 36:35)  
*\*\*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  
Lk. 9:28-31; Lk. 24:25-27, 44-47
3. Jesus taught the Apostles to interpret the OT  
Matthew;  
1 Cor. 15:45;  
Acts (e.g., 15:13-21);  
Gal. 4:21-31;  
Hebrews  
Radically transforms the way they see the OT promises (2 Cor. 1:20; Gal. 3:16, 29).
4. Apostolic hermeneutics are Christ-centered  
Christ is the fulfillment of the OT offices  
Christ is the Creator, the Last Adam, Son of God, the Israel of God, the beginning of the New Creation, the focal point of history, institutions, people and events.

1 Cor. 10:1-11

5. Apostolic hermeneutics are covenantal  
The covenantal framework of the OT provides the framework for the NT as well. The key to understanding this part of hermeneutics is understanding the lines of continuity and discontinuity between the OT and NT.  
Both lines are expressed in both testaments.  
E.g., Jer. 31; Hebrews

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.

See S. Lewis Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New*

### **A Brief Bibliography**

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Certain hermeneutical commitments result in theological systems.

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

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

*Application is not always “how to”. Most people who want application are just “how to” mechanics people who want steps to follow.*

- B. The Biblical necessity of application:  
Application is the final step of interpretation
- 1) The nature of Scripture itself!
  - 2) Lk. 3:7-14; 2 Tim. 3:16-4:2
  - 3) Trust, obedience, renewal, transformation, worship, sanctification all require the application of the Word. State the corollary: the Christian life demands application and application demands the Christian life.

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

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

As the Scripture is applied we grow in our relationship with God. We also grow in obedience, proper thinking, wisdom, relationships, etc. which makes us more like our Savior.

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

- A. Our hermeneutics and our theology often shapes our hermeneutics.  
Examples: view of the Law; sermon on the mount;
- B. Some application is *fairly* straightforward  
Ex. 20:15; Mt. 5:23-24; Rom. 13:14

- C. Other application seems non-existent  
1 Cor. 8:1; Ex. 21:35; Jud. 15:3-7
- D. Some act as if application is automatic  
“May the Holy Spirit bless these truths to your heart and life.”  
The Duck Story (Doriani)
- 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.  
Doriani, 127  
Caution: Phil. 3:1; 2 Pet. 1:12-13

#### **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. The following procedure from Doriani is helpful:
  - 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

An example: Rom. 16:16; Lev. 19:9-10

- C. Always maintain a redemptive context to the obligations, always maintain a focus on Christ.  
This prevents us from becoming rabbis and Pharisees.  
The FCF - where I need forgiveness and grace



The RHF - where Christ and His work are presented

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

This requires prayer and sometimes further study, which will be a reflection of how much we want to conform our lives to the Scriptures.

**V. Conclusion**

I don't think that application is always as hard as we make it.

There is plenty in the Bible which is as clear as day, and yet we do not apply it.

Our fundamental problem is not lack of understanding how to apply, our fundamental problem is disobedience.

The Holy Spirit illuminates our understanding, we come to the Bible with a grasp of how to interpret and how to apply, then we will find the Bible to be an inexhaustible treasure house, pointing us to Christ, deepening our relationship with Him and conforming us to His image and His will.