

Discipleship Course

Interpretation of the Scriptures (Part Two)

Proper Bible study begins with a pure motive. Our motive in interpreting the Bible in relation to God should be a better understanding of Who He is and what He desires for us. This should translate to a desire to salvage and build people as well since that is God's heart. The Scriptures speak of those that desire to be teachers but have no understanding (I Timothy 1:1-11). Their motive was not to build people, but to lift themselves up. This motive was reflected in what they produced. There was contention and strife that arose out of their discussions that would only breed more questions. Many people want to appear intellectual rather than helping people. This really is the result of the way they look at God.

I. Methods of Interpretation

- A. Literal interpretation accepts the Bible at face value. The literal understanding of what is written can derive the primary interpretation.
- B. Non-literal interpretation seeks a different understanding from the obvious. Those that use a non-literal interpretation are always looking for a hidden meaning instead of what it clearly states.

II. The Bible must be interpreted _____.

- The Bible is an historical book with an historical setting. It can only be fully understood when studied in the light of Its history. Bible geography, Bible history and of the customs and manners of the Bible lands, people and

times is needed to have a full understanding of a passage.

- The five-point question rule should be faithfully applied to any passage of Scripture one is seeking to understand. They are as follows:

- A. _____ is speaking or writing?
- B. To _____ is it being spoken or written about?
- C. _____ is being spoken or written about?
- D. _____ is it being spoken or written?
- E. _____ is it being spoken or written?

III. The Bible must be studied _____

- A. God's _____ with Israel included geographical importance (Genesis 12:1–3).

- B. _____ are distinctive within God-ordained land boundaries (Acts 17:26).

- C. The land of Israel is a _____ area creating a land bridge between continents (Isaiah 11:16; 19:23).



3. Synonymous—The same thought is repeated in equivalent terms (Proverbs 1:4; Psalm 120:2).
4. Synthetic—thoughts are built, one upon another, in a structural form from one sentence or phrase to the next to make a complete idea (Proverbs 21:27; 30:17).
5. Inverted—This type of parallelism links phrases, or sentences are presented in order and then correspond to ideas that later occur in reverse order (Matthew 13:15; Philemon 5; Colossians 1:4; III John 11; I John 2:18; Romans 2:12–14; Isaiah 55:8–9; John 1:1–2; Matthew 7:6; Acts 30:32).

- To illustrate this inversion, Matthew 13:15 tells us,
 - A. “for this people’s heart is become gross,
 - B. “...and their ears are dull of hearing,
 - C. “...and their eyes they have closed...”
 - C. “...lest at any time they should see with their eyes...”
 - B.”...and hear with their ears...”
 - A. “..and should understand with their heart.”

Hebrew Poetry has at its heart, teaching and doctrine. Its purpose is to instruct, not entertain. Understanding parallelism and the key to interpret this poetry creates an opportunity for powerful exegesis of truth from the Scripture.

IV. Examples of non-literal language

- The Bible is not to be interpreted literally in absolutely every part. Most of the Scriptures form direct statements that can be interpreted literally, however, there are some places the Bible uses figurative or non-literal language.
 - A. Similes—a figure of speech, which shows comparison. A simile represents truth in a graphic form. The key words that make up a simile are the words “like” or “as” (fill in the rest of the blanks after the references according to the examples given).
 - Exodus 24:17—“...was like a devouring fire.”
 - Psalm 2:9—“...like a potter’s vessel.”
 - Psalm 11:1—“Flee as a bird to your mountain.”
 - Psalm 68:13—“...as wings of a dove...”
 - Psalm 102:6—_____
 - Song of Solomon 2:9—_____
 - Isaiah 1:8—_____
 - Isaiah 1:18—_____
 - Matthew 18:3—_____
 - I Peter 5:8—_____
 - Revelation 9:5–10 —_____

B. Metaphors—a figure of speech which also shows comparison, but which does so by asserting one object to be another (fill in the rest of the blanks after the references according to the examples given).

- Psalm 18:2—“The Lord is my rock...”
- Psalm 22:6—“But I am a worm...”
- Psalm 57:4—_____
- Proverbs 7:4—_____
- Hosea 7:8—_____
- Hosea 10:1—_____
- Luke 13:32—_____
- Luke 22:19—_____
- II Timothy 2:21—_____
- The “I AM” titles used by the Lord Jesus Christ in John’s Gospel are all examples of metaphor.

C. Allegories—an extended metaphor. They are similar to parables, only they use metaphorical language rather than literal language.

- In Psalm 80:8, the nation of Israel is called a “vine”—a metaphor. Verses 9–16 develop this metaphor into a historical account of Israel from the exodus to the monarchy.
- Galatians 4:19–31 use the allegory of a true story of Hagar and Sarah to illustrate the difference between law and grace.

V. Poetic Parallelism

A. Definition—“Parallelism, where one clause answers to another, pertains to the genius of Hebrew poetry, the rhythm and rhyme of thought taking the place of those of words, one member of the parallelism corresponding to another in sentiment, and sometimes in terms.”¹

B. There are _____ kinds of parallelism

- Hebrew poetry is different than other poetry. English poetry is distinguished by the flow of words. It is based in a measured number of syllables and many times it rhymes. It is distinguished by the form of the language as is other poetry from other languages. Hebrew poetry does not depend upon the meter, but rather a correspondence of thought. There is a parallelism from one line to another. Hebrew Poetry is said to make up almost fifty percent of the Hebrew Bible. It was written in this form for use in songs and for memory purposes. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes has the strongest presence of parallelism in the Scripture.

1. Apposite—two or more sentences are arranged to present closely related thoughts (Proverbs 3:5).
2. Antithetic or Opposite—This is where exact opposite thoughts are expressed between two phrases or sentences (Proverbs 10:2, 7).

¹ Pierson, A.T, Knowing the Scriptures, 2015.p. 268