

Christian Principles Unit 3, Week 4

Biblical Hermeneutics

Introduction

"We should rely on the clergy/experts to tell us what the Bible means."

"People have always disagreed about the meaning of the Bible. That's why we have different denominations."

"The Bible has been used to justify everything you can think of. You can make it mean anything you want it to mean."

"That's just your interpretation." "It's impossible to determine the original author's meaning, rather, as we read it, we create our own meaning for the text."



Definition of Hermeneutics: The science/art of interpreting texts.

2 Tim 2:15* Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

“handling accurately”

“be diligent”

“ashamed”

Perspicuity

Definition: Essential clarity

What do these authors assume about the perspicuity of the Bible?

Jn. 20:31 . . . these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

2 Tim. 3:14,15 . . . that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

"The Bible is basically clear and lucid. It is simple enough for any literate person to understand its *basic message*. This is not to say that all parts of the Bible are equally clear or that there are no difficult passages or sections to be found in it. Laymen unskilled in the ancient languages and the fine points of exegesis may have difficulty with parts of scripture, but the essential content is clear enough to be understood easily."¹

¹R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p 15.

Responses to Attacks on Biblical Perspicuity

E.G. – “The Bible is so complicated. Who could understand it?”

Presuppositional Defense

If God recorded an important message for us, he would do it in a manner that is understandable.

E.G. – “We’re so far in time and culture from the original author, therefore we could never understand what he intended.”

Postmodern critics contradict themselves.

E.G. – “If it’s so easy to interpret, why are there so many denominations?”

There is historical agreement about the Bible’s main message.

E.G. – “Then...why do Christian groups disagree on essential doctrines?”

God has made his main message clear to us in three ways:

1.

"When it comes to the central core of the Christian faith . . . the biblical evidence is overwhelming. The deity of Christ, the triune nature of God, the creation of the world by God, the sinfulness of all humanity, salvation by grace through faith, the resurrection of the dead--these and many other such matters are clearly taught in scripture."²

2.

3.

²James Sire, *Scripture Twisting* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980), pp. 12,13.

1 Cor. 2:12,13a Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak...

2 Tim. 2:7* Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Grammatico-Historical Hermeneutics

Definition: A method of interpretation that takes into account common rules of grammar and syntax and the author's historical context.

THE GOAL:

Exegesis

Eisogesis

Mark 12:31 "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Three Principles that should guide our interpretation:

1. Interpret Grammatically
2. Interpret Historically
3. Interpret Critically (of which there are 5 rules)
 - Interpret...in light of the context
 - ...in light of progressive revelation
 - ...in harmony with other scripture
 - ...the unclear in light of the clear.
 - ...in light of the literary style

INTERPRET GRAMMATICALLY

Qualifications:

•

Psalm 91:4 He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.

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Rev. 1:9-20 - The symbols are identified as such ("like") and explained. Many other symbols in Revelation have been previously explained in Daniel.

INTERPRET HISTORICALLY

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)

INTERPRET CRITICALLY

Five practical rules for critical interpretation:

1. *Interpret in light of the context of the passage (which author? book? passage?).*

Mt. 16:28 "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. 17:1 And six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and brought[^] them up to a high mountain by themselves. 2 And He was transfigured before them..."

2. *Interpret in light of progressive revelation.*

Heb. 1:1,2 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Exodus 20:8-10 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

Compare with Col. 2: 16 Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

3. *Interpret scripture in harmony with other scripture.*

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

4. *Interpret the unclear in light of the clear.*

1 Cor. 15:29 Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?

5. *Interpret in light of the literary style.*

Prov. 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

Prov. 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Contrast to the didactic teaching of Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Inductive Study

Inductive reasoning: using particular facts or individual cases *to form* general conclusions.

Inductive Bible Study: **utilizing the details of the text** ("reasoning from the particular facts or individual cases") **to arrive at the author's intended meaning** ("general conclusion").

1 Cor. 2:16 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

Inductive methods and types (*genres*) of literature

The way we look at structure and understand the content of a passage depends on the kind of literature we're looking at. For instance, we would not read a legal code the same way we read a poem or parable—different genres require different inductive approaches.

LITERARY TYPE	BIBLICAL BOOK
Theological Narrative	Genesis—Esther; Acts
Poetry, Wisdom	Job—Song of Solomon
Prophecy	Isaiah—Malachi; Revelation
Gospel	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
Epistle	Romans—Jude

Inductive overview of Epistles

Overview Summary:

1. Situation and identity of author, audience, and third parties. Summarize each.
2. Major themes
3. Summarize: why is the letter written?

Paragraph Study (see next week)

Philemon: Inductive Overview Summary

1. SITUATION AND IDENTITY OF THE AUTHOR, AUDIENCE, & 3RD PARTY

AUTHOR:	AUDIENCE:	3RD PARTY:

Summary of the historical situation

Paul	Philemon	Onesimus
<p>Paul is a Christian leader, now imprisoned for his faith in Christ. While imprisoned, he has converted O., who is a slave owned by Ph., a fellow Christian worker who Paul knows & respects. He has sent O. back to Ph. with this letter, hoping that Ph. will forgive O. & be reconciled to him. Though imprisoned, Paul has financial means. He hopes to be released soon & visit Ph.</p>	<p>Philemon is a wealthy Christian worker who owns slaves & hosts a church in his house. He has a reputation as a loving & faithful Christian worker. He owns O., who has evidently run away, possibly with Ph.'s money or goods. Philemon was converted (directly or indirectly) by Paul & recognizes Paul's leadership</p>	<p>Onesimus is a slave owned by Ph. He evidently ran away, possibly stealing Ph.'s money or goods. As a runaway, he somehow made contact with Paul who led him to Christ. As a result of his conversion, he has been transformed from "useless" to a "useful" person. He has been very helpful to Paul. He is evidently the courier of this letter.</p>

2. MAJOR THEMES

Theme	References

3. WHY IS THE LETTER WRITTEN?

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Memory Verses

- 2 Tim. 2:7* - promises God's illumination of scripture, and also says we must exercise our minds to understand it
- 2 Tim. 2:15* - we must invest effort to interpret accurately, and we should be ashamed if we can't interpret the Word accurately

Assignment

Read Titus through three times and complete the Inductive overview summary for the book of Titus:

1. Chart the historical situation of the author, audience, and third party and summarize each.
2. Note at least two major theses/themes.
3. Summarize: why is the letter written?

Key Points to Know for Exam

1. Be able to define hermeneutics and inductive study.
2. Be able to define exegesis and eisogesis
3. Be familiar with the definition of perspicuity and how to defend it.
4. Be able to define grammatico-historical hermeneutics.
5. Be familiar with the five practical rules for critical interpretation.
6. Be able explain each step of the Inductive Study Method for Epistles.