

INTRODUCTION  
LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

## INTRODUCTION

Like most areas of specific study, there is a certain vocabulary used for communication and clarity. Our area under consideration is no exception. One encounters the following words when studying the area of Hermeneutics.

## OUR THEOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

"Step one involves affirming that 'all Scripture is inspired by God.' The Bible does not compete with other books for the corner on truth. It is the truth (John 17:17; Heb. 4:12)".

### I. Affirming Inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16)

All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Inspiration simply affirms that God gave us the Bible. Five hundred and seventy-seven times the Old Testament says, "thus saith the LORD." God is the author. Unless we recognize this book as coming to us from God, we will not treat it with the respect that we ought to.

Listen carefully to the words of A.W. Pink in his work entitled, *The Divine Inspiration Of The Bible*.

"The starting point of all doctrinal discussion must be the Bible. Upon the foundation of the Divine inspiration of the Bible stands or falls the entire edifice of Christian truth. Surrender the dogma of verbal inspiration and you are left like a rudderless ship on a stormy sea-at the mercy of every wind that blows. Deny that the Bible is, without any qualifications, the very Word of God, and you are left without any ultimate standard of measurement and without any supreme authority. It is useless to discuss any doctrine taught by the Bible until you are prepared to acknowledge, unreservedly, that the Bible is the final court of appeal. Grant that the Bible is a Divine revelation and communication of God's own mind and will to men, and you have a fixed starting point from which advance can be made into the domain of truth."

Thus it can be seen the necessity to maintain and affirm that the Scripture we hold in our hands today has been given to us by God and expresses His mind for us.

INTRODUCTION  
LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

II. Affirming Inerrancy (Ps. 19:8; Prov. 30:5)

- Ps 19:8 The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
- Pr 30:5 Every word of God is pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

Inerrancy simply means that it is without error or mistake. As a result of inspiration we have a Bible that is without error. It will be readily admitted that mistakes of grammar or spelling can be present because of scribes or translators, **BUT NOT** when it originally came to us from God.

III. Affirming Infallibility (Pss. 18:28; 119:105; Job 29:3)

- Ps. 18:28 For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.
- Ps. 119:105 Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
- Job 29:3 When his candle shined upon my head, *and when* by his light I walked *through* darkness;

The affirmations are progressive and consequential. First, there is inspiration, second, there is inerrancy and this leads to infallibility. Infallibility means it cannot lead the reader astray. God's Word, when rightly handled, will answer every question, solve every problem and shed light for the navigating of every darkness.

IV. Affirming Impeccability

Paul assumes the inerrancy of Scripture when he says, "The Word of Truth." When we speak of something being 'impeccable' what do we mean? **Impeccable** means not being capable of sinning or susceptible to sin. **Inerrancy** means to be free from error. **Infallible** means the Scripture is incapable of leading one astray. What do we mean when we say that the Scripture is impeccable and inerrant? Since the Scripture is free from sin, it is unable to lead us astray. It will never lead us into falsehood or damnation when properly handled.

The terms "inerrancy" and "infallible" culminate in the word "impeccable." The voice of Scripture declares it is true. The Bible guarantees the accuracy of its record. It does not guarantee the truth of each statement, but rather that each statement found has been

**INTRODUCTION**  
**LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY**

accurately recorded such as Satan's lies and wicked devices. They are false statements, but they have been accurately recorded.

Personal Bible study has a very specific goal -- namely, life-change or Christlikeness. Change is inevitable for the believer. It is inherent within the dynamics of Scripture. Growth means change.

In the study of Scripture there are certain presuppositions that we bring to the hermeneutical table. These presuppositions form for the interpreter cornerstones. In our lesson entitled, *The Reader As Interpreter*, we noted that a presupposition is an assumption or belief and this belief or assumption is going to color our understanding of the literature we are about to read. These are the cornerstones upon which the hermeneutical process is to be built.

V. Affirming Perspicuity (Deut. 30:11-14)

God's Word Is Clear and Complete (Deut. 30:11-20).

- 11 ¶ For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. 15 ¶ See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; 16 In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. 17 But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; 18 I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. 19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: 20 That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

Our passage before us speaks of God’s Word being clear (vv. 11-14) and complete (vv. 15-20). There are two theological words to consider at this time. The first is LARGE and the second is normal. **First**, is the word “perspicuity.” Perspicuity means something is “clear” or “transparent.” God spoke to be understood. There is nothing occult or hidden in the Bible. Thus, what God has written can be understood. **Second**, is the word “sufficiency.” Sufficient means to be entirely adequate for its intended purpose. Second Timothy 3:16 tells me that His Word is profitable or useful. Since the Scripture is enough I do not need anything else. If you will allow this truth to grip your soul and mind, it will save you a lot of heartache and headache. God is enough.

The Word of God is plain. It is not written in such a way as to be unattainable nor incomprehensible, but is capable of being pondered on by the greatest minds and grasped by the simplest thinkers. God spoke in such a way as to be understood. Communication assumes the desire to be understood. This concept is no less true with God.

#### VI. Affirming Sufficiency (2 Timothy 3:16)

All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

All Scripture is profitable or of value. No other book rests on the same plain as the mighty Word of God. It is equally with none. Is the Bible all we need or do we need something else?

## HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutic is simply the transliteration of the Greek word *hermenia*. It literally means

To transliterate is to give English letters for the Greek letters without translating the Greek word.

“understanding.” If kept in mind, Hermeneutics is the study of those rules that assist us in *understanding* God’s Word.

“Hermeneutics, properly speaking is the art and science of biblical interpretation and comes from the Greek term, *hermeneuo*, which means to interpret or to explain.”<sup>1</sup>

Alternatively, more simply put, it is the science of basic Bible study.

“It is in the wake of Martin Luther's *sola scriptura* that we see the dawn of a genuinely modern hermeneutics. Following Luther's emphasis on faith and inwardness, it was possible to question the authority of traditional interpretations of the Bible in order to

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

emphasize the way in which each and every reader faces the challenge of making the truths of the text her own [i.e. priesthood of the believer and soul liberty].<sup>2</sup> Our understanding of a text does not consist in a faithful adoption of the predominant or authorized readings of the time. It is up to the individual reader to stake out her own path to the potential meaning and truth of the text. Reading now becomes a problem in a new way.”<sup>3</sup>

*Why is our ability in this area so crucial?* **First**, without understanding the fundamental laws of language it would be impossible for two people to communicate. In addition, communication is the key to all relationships. **Second**, many disregard the laws of language thus making communication subjective and hence impossible.

“There are many pitfalls, however, that poor exegetes can fall into as they mishandle the Word of God. People have a tendency to explain away anything they don’t like as “culture bound” or in some way irrelevant to modern society. They can take a word in Scripture and project a contemporary meaning onto it that is inappropriate for its original use. They can take a text that is “descriptive” of a historical event and make it a “prescriptive” command for Christians to follow today. They can take a statement out of context and draw all kinds of ridiculous conclusions.”<sup>4</sup>

I wish to cite *two negative examples* to prove the point. **First**, without revealing either the title or the author, consider the following statement about a recent publication.

Using the biblical analogy of the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13), the author reminds readers that children are like the seeds in this parable. They are neither good nor bad, and their growth depends on the ground in which they are planted.

From the above statement, there are two glaring problems. Initially, there is the complete disregard for the author’s intended meaning (for example that of Matthew / God). Nowhere are the seeds in the parable identified as being children through either interpretation or application. In addition, the theological problems of finding children as morally neutral where environment dictates direction is scary.

A **second** example is in the lyrical style of much Christian Music. The musician writes in such an ambiguous way as to allow the listener to give whatever meaning they wish to the song. Listen to the following printed dialogue concerning a group’s lyrical gymnastics.

Every song has a deep meaning, but you have to dig. It is ok for listeners to come up with alternative meanings, too. If we just tell someone what a song means when we wrote it that might limit a revelation they might have by listening to it.

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

Of course, listeners are not the only ones who might find a different take on a given song. At an interview, --- says, "One of us was talking about what the song is about and the rest of us are going, *what?* I think it's cool if the five of us can find different meanings in the song."

If language can mean anything, the listener wants it to mean, then in reality it means nothing. A word can have more than one meaning, but not in context.

All courses dealing with Bible Study either directly or indirectly will deal with the issues found under the umbrella of hermeneutics. Some are intentional in laying down the principles necessary to understanding the book considered and others assume and proceed without explaining the framework for understanding the work. Yet all works, in dealing with Scripture, are hermeneutical in nature. Why is this so? Because everyone without exception is engaged in hermeneutics the moment they begin reading their Bible.

Everyone, who has ever picked up the Bible, has interpreted the Scripture.<sup>5</sup>

Interpretation links to sense experience. This simply means that all that you are comes into play when you pick up the Bible and begin to read its pages. Thus, no interpretation is without bias. It does not mean that all bias is bad, but it does mean there is no one who is without bias. Everyone, without exception, has presuppositions. In addition, these presuppositions interpret process and ultimately understand all things experienced.

#### I. The purpose of hermeneutics

"The purpose of hermeneutics is to establish guidelines and rules for interpretation."<sup>6</sup> Hermeneutic is simply the employed rules used in the reading of any written record. It matters little if the work is by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Lewis Carroll or Bram Stoker; the reading of any literary work demands the use of rules. All people use the rules. Few are, however, aware of the laws that permit true communication to take place. Without these unchanging rules, the exchanging of ideas would be impossible. Thus "the aim of good interpretation is simple: to get at the *plain meaning of the text.*"

#### II. The presuppositions in hermeneutics

Before we go further, let us define what we mean by *presuppositions*. A presupposition is an assumption or belief. This belief or assumption or presupposition is going to color our understanding of the literature we are about to read. We are going to assume certain truths before we even pick up the Bible to read it as literature. As an interpreter, there are four presuppositions that we will bring to the process.

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

"The first reason one needs to learn how to interpret is that, whether one likes it or not, every reader is at the same time an interpreter." As an interpreter, we are learning a process called hermeneutics. Moreover, hermeneutics is the science of Bible study.

Perspective shapes interpretation of the data. All that makes up you, your past experiences and your present level of knowledge, will shape the way you view Scripture.

## INTERPRETATION

The surprise behind this word is the fact that it is the actual Greek word behind our English word *hermeneutics*!!! It carries with it the idea of, "interpreting what has been spoken more or less obscurely by others." The noun form is used only two times in the entire New Testament ('interpretation' in First Corinthians 12:10; 14:26). The verb form carries with it the same idea of "explaining in words, to translate what has been spoken or written in a foreign tongue into the vernacular or language of the listener." The verb is used four times ('interpreted' in John 1:38,42; 9:7; Heb. 7:2).

The word "interpretation" as it is found in the New Testament is the Greek word *hermenia*. The New Testament uses it only four times and only in the following passages.

- John 1:38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?
- John 1:42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.
- John 9:7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.
- Heb 7:2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

Notice how in each of the passages a word explains. Thus, the writer or communicator interprets or gives the meaning of the word so understanding would take place in the minds of the readers.

INTRODUCTION  
LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

Rabbi	Master
Cephas	Stone
Siloam	Sent
Salem	Peace

There are two primary cornerstones upon which the hermeneutical process is built.

As we continue in our journey through the hermeneutical process it is imperative that we keep our intellectual wits about us. Often in the midst of an incredibly dense jungle there is the tendency to become disoriented and thus lost. To avoid such a calamity from arising we must always seek to find truth North on our hermeneutical compass.

In considering the larger picture of hermeneutics it is time to introduce another word into our ever expanding hermeneutical vocabulary. Perhaps a synonym for hermeneutics is the English word *exegesis*.

## EXEGESIS

As to the method, "Exegesis is the first part of the bible interpretation process. Essentially, it is the grammatical, historical and cultural study of a passage of the Bible to try to determine its meaning to the original audience. It is trying to answer the question: "What was God trying to say to the original hearers of a particular text?" Too often, we start from the perspective of what this text means to me. It is a subjective way to read the Scriptures and has the potential to severely misinterpret a passage of Scripture."<sup>7</sup>

Howard Hendricks notes how, "The primary task of any teacher of Scripture is to explain what the text means."

Thus, "the *first task* of the interpreter is called exegesis (notice the emphasis on *first task*. I put it there for a reason). Exegesis is the careful, systematic study of the Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning [A.I.M. = Author's Intended Meaning]."

And again, "learning to think exegetically is not the only task; it is simply the first task." Did you catch that? Exegesis is not the only task, but it is the first task. Thus everyone begins here. No one who is chained to the text of Scripture or is endeavoring to be faithful to the text can begin anywhere else. To do so is to commit hermeneutical suicide.

There are three English words involved in the hermeneutical process that need to be accented.



## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

Our English word is a transliteration (remember what a transliteration is?) of the Greek word *Εξεγερσαι*. It means “to lead out, to make known.” It carries the idea of unfolding. It is used seven times in the New Testament.

I will list the various occurrences for clarity sake.

- Luke 24:35 In this passage Jesus “unfolds” for the two walking to Emmaus the truth concerning Himself from the Old Testament.
- John 1:18 Here Jesus is the “unfolding” of the Father to the world.
- Acts 10:8 Cornelius “unfolding” to his audience what the angel had said to him.
- Acts 15:12 Paul “unfolds” to his audience what God had done through him.
- Acts 15:14 James “unfolded” to his audience what God through Peter had done.
- Acts 21:19 Again, Paul “unfolds” to his audience what God had done through him.

What is of equal interest is to note four Old Testament passages where the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (The Septuagint or LXX) uses the word *exegesis* (*εξεγερσαι*). Leviticus 14:57 where it is translated "teach" and 2 Kings 8:5 where it is translated "telling" (also see Job 12:8 ad 28:27).

Just for the sake of clarity and an increase of knowledge (I know who cares) let us note the difference between two terms. The first is our current term *exegesis* and the second is the word *exposition*. What is *exegesis* as it relates to *exposition*?

‘Exegesis’ is the critical or technical application of hermeneutical principles to a biblical text in the original language with a view to the exposition or declaration of its meaning. ‘Exposition’ is defined as a discourse setting forth the meaning of a passage in a popular form. It is roughly synonymous with expository preaching. In a comparison of these two it is to be noted that *exegesis* is more foundational and more critically and technically oriented. *Exposition* is based upon *exegesis* and has in view a more popular audience. (MacArthur, *Expository Preaching*, p. 304)

If you have been paying attention at all. You will have seen that *exegesis* is simply another name for the *hermeneutical process*. Whereas *exposition* is just another name for the *homiletical process*. If this is kept in mind, then it should become a little bit clearer (yeah, right).

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

Thus in the handling of God's Word it is the responsibility of the interpreter to "accurately handle" the text. Or as John MacArthur notes, "the preacher's proper task is to deliver the goods, not to manufacture them. He is the waiter, not the chef." (MacArthur, Expository Preaching, p. 257).

## EXPOSITION

Exposition comes from the word "to expound". The Greek word (**epiluo**) means, "to unloose, or untie." It also means, "to explain what is obscure and hard to understand." It is used only two times in the New Testament ('expounded' in Mark 4:34; and 'determined' in Acts 19:39).

The Greek word is a compound word coming from **epi** (a simple prefix that intensifies usage) and **luo** (to loosen). Hence, an expositional sermon or study is a study that seeks to unloose from the text the author's intended meaning.

There is another word that comes from the same family and it is the word **epilusis**. Again, it carries the same idea as "loosening, unloosing, or interpretation." This particular word is found only in Second Peter 1:20.

In looking at these three words; *exegesis*, *exposition*, and *interpretation* it is crucial that we do not become "jumpy" and start running from the sound of our own foot steps.

By introducing these new words we now need to explain what is involved in the *exegetical process*.

## LEARNING TO DO EXEGESIS

If you have even been remotely awake in all of this you will hopefully have seen that learning to do exegesis is really learning to think the process of hermeneutics. Thus the process of exegesis is really the process of hermeneutics or the science of basic Bible study.

Remember, "the key to good exegesis, and therefore to a more intelligent reading of the Bible, is to learn to read the text carefully and to ask the right questions [the key to Biblical interpretation] of the text." (p. 23)

There is a perennial enemy of exegesis and that is the term eisogesis. If exegesis means "to lead out", then eisogesis means "to lead into."

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

Notice the contrasting thought behind *exegetis* and *eisogesis*. "Exegesis means to explain what Scripture says. To exegete Scriptures is to get out of the words the meaning that is there, no more and no less. Eisogesis involves reading into the text something that isn't there at all. Exegesis is an objective enterprise. Eisogesis involves an exercise in subjectivism." R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 39.

If the key to all interpretation is learning to ask the right questions, then we need to focus on the type of questions needing to be asked. In considering the exegetical process "there are two basic kinds of questions one should ask of every biblical passage: those that relate to context [its limitations or borders] and those that relate to content [the different objects that make up the picture]." (p. 23).

The context of any passage can be likened to a picture frame whereas the content is the picture itself. The purpose of the context (or frame) is to enhance and accent the content (or picture).

"Because the Bible is God's Word, it has eternal relevance; it speaks to all mankind, in every age and in every culture. Because it is God's Word, we must listen--and obey. But because God chose to speak His Word through human words in history, every book in the Bible also has historical particularity; each document is conditioned by (1) the language, (2) time, and (3) culture [and {4} location] in which it was originally written." Thus the need to interpret the Bible. (p. 19).

There are four definitive areas that act as restraints within any given context. Regardless as the passage under consideration these four areas form a grid through which every (and I mean every) interpreter must pass if he will arrive at his destination of unfolding the author's intended meaning.

I. The Grid Of Grammar - "What type of style has been employed?"  
(MacArthur, *Expository Preaching*, p. 261 [pts 1-3]).

A. In grammar, there is the style of speech

Often you will see the term *genre*. "The term genre means simply 'kind,' 'sort' or 'species.' Genre analysis involves the study of such things as literary forms, figures of speech and style." R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 49.

Here you must ask if it is poetry, or proverbial, or perhaps prophetic or even prose or parabolic. There are many different styles of speech used by the Biblical writer.

## INTRODUCTION – OBSERVATION – INTERPRETATION – APPLICATION

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

The Bible as literature was in several distinct styles.

#### 1. Prose (historical narrative)

Prose is the language of primary communication. Normal speech is in prose. The historical narratives of Scripture are typically written in prose format.

- Mark 4:35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. 37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? 39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

#### 2. Poetic

Notice the figures of speech or word pictures used throughout Psalm 42. Soul's panting, thirsting, tears being meat, a person's soul being poured out before the Lord. All of this is reflective of poetic speech.

- Psalm 42:1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? 3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? 4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

#### 3. Parables

Parables are stories that will typically teach a greater doctrinal truth. Their purpose appears to be that of both concealing and revealing the truth of God.

- Mark 4:1 And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. 2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

them in his doctrine, 3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: 4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. 5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. 9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

#### 4. Proverbial

A good example of a proverb is that of Proverbs 30:33.

- Proverbs 30:33 Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

A proverb takes a biblical truth as seen in life and capsulizes it into a memorable format.

#### 5. Prophetic

Prophetic speech looks to the future for its literal fulfillment.

- Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

#### 6. Psalms

Most Psalms are written in a poetic format. Throughout the Psalms you see various types of parallelism presented. Psalm 19 is a good example of the kind of parallelism you will encounter throughout the Psalms.

- Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. 7 ¶ The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple. 8 The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.

It is imperative to identify the style of writing. Why? Because each style has certain characteristics that are unique to the style. Such as proverbs being principle oriented,

**INTRODUCTION**  
**LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY**

psalms employ a lot of parallelism, prophecy uses a lot of figures of speech, prose are typically historical narratives and parables cannot be allowed to 'walk on all fours'.

B. In grammar, there is the style of grammatical structure

"Grammatical structure determines whether words are to be taken as questions (interrogative), commands (imperative) or declarative (indicative)." R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 56.

As "spooky" as all of this may sound, every one (and again I mean everyone) reads and thus directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally automatically interprets the passage read in its literary style as well as its grammatical structure.

There are five key ideas that need to be continually stressed.

1. God is expressing His will through human instruments\_(Heb. 1:1; 2 Pt. 1:21; Acts 1:16).

This will keep you focused. God is not speaking in some type of language that will need to be decoded. He spoke the language that makes it possible for Him to be understood. Thus there is nothing hidden or cryptic that we are trying to find.

2. There is only one message within any given passage

This is called the univocalness of language. This will keep you from speculation and subjectivity. If a passage has more than one voice, then 1) who determines what passage has a 2nd voice and 2) who determines what the voice is saying?

"To ascribe hidden meanings to Scripture, a person assumes an authority equivalent to or superceding that of the author. The interpreter -- whether an individual or the church -- actually purports to be the authority standing above Scripture." (McQuilkin, pp. 30,31)

3. The primary task of any interpreter is to find that message or the author's intended meaning

Thus, a text can never mean what it never meant to the original author. This will keep you from expressing your mindset instead of God's. Often the question is asked, "Did the speaker understand the message he was asked to communicate?" the answer to the

INTRODUCTION  
LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

question is two-fold. **First**, he would understand the meaning (For example knowledge; 1 Cor. 14:32,33), but **Second**, not necessarily the significance (For example understanding/application; Acts 8:26-35). The prophet might not understand the full implications of his statement, but he understood its meaning.

4. All applications must be consistent with the intended meaning or Purpose of the passage

This will keep you from becoming mystical or existential. "The most important thing is to base the application ... on the intended meaning of the text." (Osborne, p. 344 [cf. p. 318])

5. Understand that all scripture is *profitable* but not all is *applicable* to the believer today

The distinction wishing to be drawn is that which exists between knowledge and application. All Bible knowledge is profitable, but not necessarily applicable. Knowledge is fundamentally necessary to application. But the knowledge itself might not be applicable. This will keep you from trying to find application when none is available.

One of the continued tensions is that of seeking to apply Old Testament narratives to us today. Why do we wish the OT narratives to apply to us today? Fee and Stuart suggest three reasons (How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth, p. 84).

- a. We Are Desperate.

Desperate for information that will help us, that will be of personal value, that will apply to our own situation.

- b. We Are Impatient.

We want our answers now, from this book, from this chapter.

- c. We Wrongly Expect That Everything In The Bible Applies Directly As Instruction For Our Own Individual Lives.

If a fundamental principle of hermeneutics is that all Scripture is profitable, but not all is applicable, how then should I view the Old Testament Scripture?

- II. The grid of history ("Evaluation in light of its historical circumstances.")

INTRODUCTION – OBSERVATION – INTERPRETATION – APPLICATION

**INTRODUCTION**  
**LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY**

"Historical analysis involves seeking a knowledge of the setting and situation in which the books of the Bible were written." R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 57.

No event in history happens in an historical vacuum. All things interact with his immediate environment. Nothing is an historical island unto itself. The grid of history takes this into consideration in the hermeneutical process.

III. The grid of theology

This grid seeks to integrate all of Scripture with itself. No passage is an island unto itself. The theological grid provides for the reader the BIG PICTURE. If theology is properly understood, then many grievous errors can be avoided.

Remember, our intent is to lead out of the passages the author's intended meaning. It is not to read into the passage our meaning.

We must be chained to the text of Scripture. May God enable us to be strong enough to speak only those words that He gives us from the text.

## THE ANALOGY OF FAITH

Imagine yourself putting together a massive puzzle. This puzzle has thirty-one thousand one hundred and sixty-seven pieces. The pieces themselves fall under ten different categories. Consider also how difficult the task would be if you did not have a picture from which to work. Without the picture you would have no idea as to what you were looking for nor where you were going with the various pieces.

Observation and investigation are primarily concerned with looking at the various pieces. Our next area of concern is correlation. Correlation is concerned with the big picture. Correlation provides for the interpreter the BIG PICTURE. Correlation seeks to enable the interpreter in putting the multiple pieces into a recognizable whole. "Correlation allows us to see the part [the text we study] in the light of the whole [the entire Bible]. It provides the way to gain a proper biblical perspective - -to major on majors and minor on minors. Correlation . . . prevents us from drawing wrong conclusions from only part of what the Bible says." (Mayhue, pp. 62,63.)

Perhaps the best place to show this is found in 2 Peter 1:20, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." The word used by Peter for



## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

“private” is also found in 1 Peter 3:1,5; 2 Peter 1:20,21; 2:16,22; 3:3,16, and 17. It literally means, “pertaining to one's self, one's own, belonging to one's self.” The idea is that of being singular or isolated. Hence, Peter tells us that no Word from God is of a singular or isolated interpretation. No verse is an island unto itself. It must interact with its Scriptural environment. The tragedy of today is our inability to think theologically. We have failed to grasp this principle and thus the big picture. It is because of this inability that we find the flourishing of deviant or “cultic” thinking.

This idea of thinking large is called *the analogy of faith*. "The analogy of faith is the rule that Scripture is to interpret Scripture: *Sacra Scriptura sui interpres* (Sacred Scripture is its own interpreter). This means, quite simply, that no part of Scripture can be interpreted in such a way as to render it in conflict with what is clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture." (R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* [Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1977], p. 46).

In a very real sense correlation corresponds with the idea of understanding. In Acts 8:30 Philip was sent by an angel to minister to a eunuch from Ethiopia. Philip asked the Ethiopian a penetrating question, “do you understand what you are reading?” The Ethiopian’s response is equally sobering, “how could I, unless someone guides me?” What the reader did not have was the big picture. He could not correlate what information he did have with the larger picture of theology. Philip’s word choice is interesting. The word for “understand” means simply to know. But the depth of the knowing is what sets this word apart. If I were to ask you if you know who Adam is, you might respond by saying yes. And I would agree. But if I were to ask you if you know Adam like Eve knew Adam, you would give an emphatic no! Why? Because even though you both know Adam, she knows Adam in a very more intimate way. This is what Philip asked the eunuch. He said, “do you know in an intimate way the Scripture?” And even though our text tells us that he had gone to Jerusalem to worship and even though he knew the Bible, he did not KNOW the Bible! At least not in an intimate, personal way.

There is another interesting word in the New Testament concerning correlation and it means “to set or bring together, to set or join together in the mind.” It carries with it the idea of putting together the various pieces of the puzzle in order to see the big picture.

It is used twenty-five times in the New Testament (Matt. 13:13-15,19,23,51; 15:10; 16:12; 17:13; Rom. 3:11; Luke 2:50; 18:34; 24:44,45; Eph. 5:17). God expects us to understand His Word. Each book, each verse, each thought, each idea is a piece of the Biblical puzzle and we are to lean heavily on the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit in order that we might be able to put all of the various pieces into a coherent whole so that we might see the big picture. Oh may God open our eyes in order that we might see the big picture.

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

You have carefully gathered your various pieces and have begun the arduous task of putting the various pieces together. As they slowly begin to fit all the various pieces together the big picture starts to come into view. Now you are at the point where you can begin to tell what the picture is revealing. As you begin to see the picture displayed, this is what is called, “interpretation.” Interpretation asks and endeavors to answer, “what does it mean?” This question is at the heart of interpretation. (Mayhue, p. 59). Your quest is for meaning.

The word “interpretation” is found only two times in the entire Bible (the noun once in Mark 4:34 and the verb once in Acts 19:39). It means “to release or solve.” In Mark 4:34 Jesus addresses the multitudes using the literary style of parables. Parables have often been cited as earthly stories with heavenly meanings. Parables told stories using earthy, immediate circumstances. The idea is that a parable was used in order to communicate truth. Yet, our Lord used parables to keep truth from some and to reveal it to others! Apparently this is the idea behind our Lord’s words in Matthew 13:10-17. Both Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus would “release or solve” the meaning of the parables for His disciples when in private with them (“But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.”). Jesus did release the meaning of His words to His disciples. He “interpreted” the words. This interpretation was an understanding of the author’s intended meaning.

There is another word in our New Testament that means “to exercise the mind.” It is found in Matthew 15:17 and 16:9,11. It is used a total of fourteen times in the New Testament. The gospel accounts are interesting because they are found in questions that rebuke His disciples. Jesus apparently expected His disciples to have understood what He was speaking of. His disciples had failed to “exercise their minds.” Like His disciples Jesus expects us to exercise our minds in the pursuit of mastery.

In seeking the author’s intended meaning we need to look at the Bible as we would any other piece of literature (except that it is inspired, inerrant and infallible!). A literal method of interpretation recognizes various forms of figures of speech. By looking at a figure literally you are looking at it as a literal figure.

Listen to perhaps a clearer statement concerning a literal approach to interpretation. “The Bible should be interpreted according to its literal sense. This was Luther’s principle of interpreting the Bible by its *sensus literalis*. To interpret the Bible literally is to interpret it as literature. That is, the natural meaning of a passage is to be interpreted according to the normal rules of grammar, speech, syntax and context.” (R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* [Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1977], pp.)

INTRODUCTION  
LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

## Analogy of faith

[http://www.theopedia.com/Analogy\\_of\\_faith](http://www.theopedia.com/Analogy_of_faith)

The **analogy of faith** was a key principle of interpretation taught by the Reformers which teaches that Scripture should interpret Scripture. This principle is stated in the Westminster Confession (1.9) in this manner: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly."

"There must be a consistency in all revealed truth because it represents absolute truth in the mind of God. Therefore each passage can have only one certain and simple sense. As the infallibly inspired word of God, the Scriptures are reliable, self-consistent and carry within them all that is needed for clarity. Since all that God makes known fits with what He knows perfectly, it is always proper to assume that no contradictions or dual realities can be attached to what He speaks." Bob Burridge

Charles Hodge, in his *Systematic Theology*, has expressed the idea this way: "If the Scriptures be what they claim to be, the word of God, they are the work of one mind, and that mind divine. From this it follows that Scripture cannot contradict Scripture. God cannot teach in one place anything which is inconsistent with what He teaches in another. **Hence Scripture must explain Scripture.** If a passage admits of different interpretations, that only can be the true one which agrees with what the Bible teaches elsewhere on the same subject.<sup>[1]</sup>"

### **Basis for the term**

In Romans 12:6 Paul says that each one was to exercise his gift of prophecy, i.e., of teaching, "according to the proportion of faith." The Greek word for *proportion* here is *analogia*, and hence the phrase *analogy of faith*. The meaning is, that the utterances of the "prophet" were not to fluctuate according to his own impulses or independent thoughts, but were to be in accordance with the truth revealed to him as a believer. Following the Reformation, this phrase was used to mean that all Scripture was to be interpreted with reference to all other Scripture. In other words, no single text or expression of Scripture was to be isolated or interpreted in a way contrary to its general teaching.

### **Cautions and concerns**

The principle of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture *is a valid aspect* of the "analogy of faith," presupposing a unity and self-consistency in Scripture as the work of God. Critics from within conservative evangelicalism warn of potential misuse when the analogy of faith is restricted to that which one finds harmonious and non-contradictory at the expense of sound hermeneutics and exegesis.

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON THREE – UNDERSTANDING OUR VOCABULARY

Walter Kaiser, in *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, says "the Church at large (since the time of the Reformers especially) is in error when she uses the analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) as an exegetical device for extricating meaning from or importing meaning to texts that appeared earlier than the passage where the teaching is set forth most clearly or perhaps even for the first time" (p.82). While the concept of progressive revelation suggests interpreting the Old Testament in light of the New, Kaiser argues that this is not a license to read meanings into the OT that are not there. He sees misapplications of the "analogy of faith" in the past doing just that.

Daniel Fuller also sees the use of the "analogy of faith" by the Reformers, evident in Luther, as introducing a subjectivity that sometimes contradicts the very idea of Sola Scriptura for which they argued (see Fuller, in external links below).

#### Notes

1. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, Introduction, Chapter VI, The Protestant Rule of Faith.

#### Resources

- R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, InterVarsity Press (1977). See chapter 3. ISBN 0877847339

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.free-bible-study-lessons.net/bible-interpretation-lesson-1-2.html>

<sup>2</sup> The priesthood of the believer celebrates the access the individual has to God without need of any human mediation. Soul liberty believes conscience governs the individual. Neither one is outside the objective understanding of the biblical text or the community of faith, the local church.

<sup>3</sup> <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hermeneutics/>

<sup>4</sup> "Exegesis: You Can Do It," Henry Blackaby, August 26, 2013, <http://www.faithgateway.com/exegesis-you-can-do-it/#.U-UM06PA66M>

<sup>5</sup> There is an initial indebtedness to the work of Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), pp. 15-28.

<sup>6</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.free-bible-study-lessons.net/bible-interpretation-lesson-1-2.html>