Interpretation: What Does It Mean?

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THE PROCESS OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Hermeneutics is the <u>science</u> and <u>art of</u> interpretation. It is a science because it follows certain rules. It is an art because it is a skill one develops with practice.

Hermeneutics is the study of methodological principles of interpretation which allows us to take what we <u>see</u> and determine what it <u>means</u>.

Three Truths to remember:

- 1. It takes time to expose oneself to the brilliance of revealed truth.
- 2. There is more truth in the Bible than we can grasp in one or many readings. Infinite, eternal truth has this nature.
- 3. It takes practice and experience skills to develop an understanding of the text with accuracy.

A. SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION – ANSWERING THE QUESTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- *Content* What is actually before you in the text. It is discovered by the results of your observational study. How to read and what to look for is the key (there is a huge difference between <u>seeing</u> and <u>reading</u>).
- *Clue* The more time spent in observation, the less time you will spend in interpretation and the more accurate will be the results of your interpretation.
- *Context* What goes before and after? (There is both a near and a far context).
- *Comparison* Compare Scripture with Scripture. *Remember the <u>parts</u> always take on meaning in the light of the <u>whole</u>.
- *Culture* What was the social setting at that time? What was the historical situation? What was the *chronos*, language, customs, political environment?
- *Consultation* Use resource tools (after you have done personal study). This includes dictionaries, atlases, concordance, commentaries, etc.; check your interpretation with other great women and men of God. If you are the only one to see the text a certain way, you are probably wrong.
- *Construction* Build an exegetically and homiletically sound outline that arises clearly out of the text. Let the text determine the structure of your outline.

Remember: First comes God's Word, then secondary sources!

B. TEN INTERPRETIVE RULES

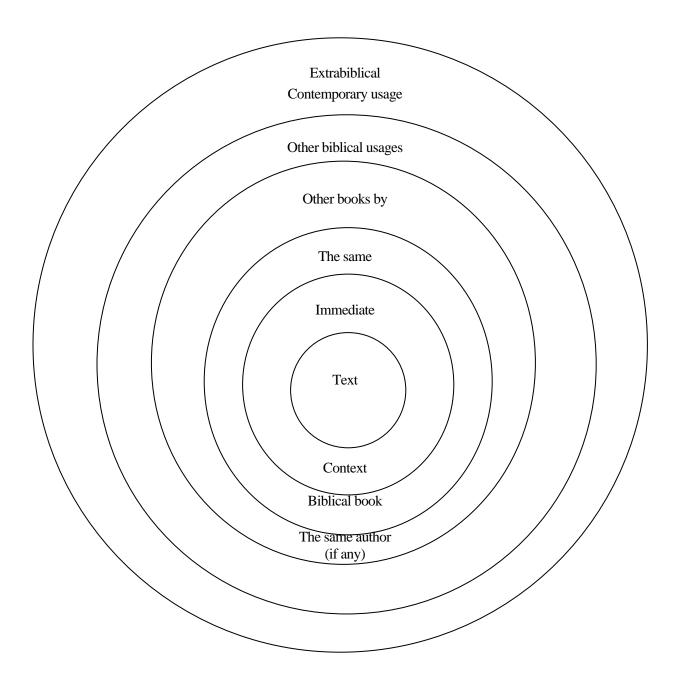
Just as there must be the proper use of the proper tools, there must also be the observance of some simple rules if accurate interpretation is to take place. Remember that hermeneutics is both an art and a science; a science because there are rules and principles.

- 1. Work from the assumption that the Bible is authoritative.
- 2. Interpret difficult passages in the light of clear passages. Let the Bible interpret itself.
- 3. Interpret personal experience in the light of Scripture and not Scripture in the light of personal experience.
- 4. Remember that Scripture has only ONE MEANING but many applications.
 - One Meaning (Sense)
 - Many Applications (Significance)
- 5. Interpret words and passages in harmony with their meaning in the time of the author.

INTERPRETATION IS BRIDGING THE GAPS

- The Language Gap
- The Historical Gap
- The Cultural Gap
- The Geographical Gap
- The Literary Gap
- The Theological Gap
- 6. Interpret Scripture in light of its PROGRESSIVE REVELATION.
- 7. Remember you must understand the Bible grammatically before you can understand it theologically.
- 8. A doctrine cannot be considered biblical unless it includes all that the Scriptures say about it. DO not practice "selective citation" or "proof-texting."
- 9. Distinguish between the PROVERBS and the PROMISES of God.
- 10. When two doctrines taught in the Bible appear to be contradictory, accept both as Scriptural in the confident belief that they resolve themselves in a higher unity.

THE PREACHER/TEACHER AND PREPARATION: INVESTIGATION



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETATION

- 1. The context rules when interpreting the text.
- 2. The text must be interpreted in light of all Scripture.
- 3. Scripture will never contradict itself.
- 4. Scripture should be interpreted literally.
- 5. Do not develop doctrine from obscure or difficult passages.
- 6. Discover the author's original intended meaning.
- 7. Check your conclusions using reliable resources.

Analyzing The Text

Verse 1 (1/4 page to a full page)

Verse 2 (1/4 page to a full page)

Verse 3 (1/4 page to a full page)

- 1. Pray.
- 2. Track the verbs and parse them (if you can).
- 3. Look for key words needing definition.
- 4. Look for repetition of phrases and words.
- 5. Look for seams in the text which will inform the number of points and the nature of the teaching outline.
- 6. Note the near and far context.
- 7. Search for helpful and supporting Scripture (cross reference).
- 8. Write out any and all observations and applications you see in the text.
- 9. Examine your study aids and write out any helpful insights (note the source for future reference and appropriate citation).
- 10. Look for exegetical truth and avenues the text logically supports.
- 11. Merge your exegesis into the outline structure of your teaching.

SEVEN STEPS TO STUDYING AND PREACHING/TEACHING THE BIBLE (A Summation)

1. Observation	What do I see?
2. Interpretation	What does it mean?
3. Correlation	How does it fit together?
4. Application	How do I put this into practice?
5. Illustration	How has this principle worked in other areas and in other people's lives?
6. Proclamation	How do I communicate this truth to others?
7. Motivation	How do I encourage others to love God by obeying God?