

## Sacred Hermeneutics

### Lesson 1

## A GENERAL INTRODUCTION\*

There he goes a flash across the heavens - Mercury the messengers of the gods. Also known as the god of science, invention, eloquence, speech, writing and art. His Greek name is Hermes. Now look in Luke chapter 24:27

"And beginning with Moses and all the prophets. he EXPLAINED to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:27)

Explained (NIV) Interpreted (AV) the Greek word is DIERMENEUO. DIA means through, give a rough breathing to "E" and we have the exact word from which our English word HERMENEUTICS is derived HERMENEUO. A word used by Plato. Sacred Hermeneutics is the science and art of Biblical Interpretation.

### HERMENEUTICS IS:-

1. A science because it is guided by rules within a system.
2. An art because of the application of the rules.
3. By skill and not mechanical imitation.

HERMENEUTICS is usually studied with a view to the interpretation of literature produced in the past. The special task is to remove the distance and differences between the author and the reader.

In the study of the Bible, it is not sufficient that we understand the meaning of Secondary authors. Moses, Isaiah, Paul, John etc. We must learn the mind of the Holy Spirit.

### 1] THE PRIMARY NEED.

1. That God has spoken in Holy Scripture is the very heart of our faith - without this certainty we are left with that very dubious thing called HUMAN KNOWLEDGE God has spoken! But what has He said? This is the primary and basic need of hermeneutics to discover what God has said in scripture; to determine the meaning of the Word of God. It is of no profit to us if God has spoken and we do not know what He has said!
2. We need a correct method of interpretation so as not to confuse the VOICE OF GOD with the VOICE OF MAN. Because Scripture has not been properly interpreted many strange things have crept into the church and cults.

## 2] THE SECONDARY NEED.

We need to bridge the gap between our minds and the minds of the Biblical writers.

1. LANGUAGE. Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. The English language is analytic in structure. The sense of the sentence depends largely on word order "the rat ate the cheese". Greek is an agglutinative language. You can move the words about and not change the meaning for meaning is not dependent on word order but on word endings, hence "the cheese ate the rat". You cannot have a word for word meaning of the NT.
2. CULTURE GAP. Until we can recreate and understand the cultural patterns of the various Biblical periods we will be handicapped. Knowledge of marriage customs, economic practice, military systems, legal systems, agriculture all help.
3. GEOGRAPHY. We need to know about the difference of Israel to Egypt. Towns, rivers, mountains, lakes, the fertile crescent etc.
4. HISTORY. History is the plot of scripture. We need to know about the 400 years between the gospels to begin to understand the gospels. The PAX ROMANA (Roman Peace). The provinces of Asia have a history that helps us to understand Paul's travels (see Paul Treveller and Roman Citizen by Sir William Ramsey)

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## A SPECIFIC INTRODUCTION.

### 1] Assumptions.

We come to the text believing in its divine inspiration. This involved UNDERSTANDING the [CANON OF SCRIPTURE](#). The textual critic is not adding or taking away but determining what was the original wording. This is a very complicated and difficult task.

### 2] Definitions.

Hermeneutics applies to the general science of linguistics and meaning. Seeks to formulate particular rules. Stands in the same relationship as a rule book does to a game. The rules are NOT THE GAME but the game is meaningless without the rules.

### 3] Qualifications.

"In order to appreciate and use the Bible, the reader of it must himself have the the same spirit which enabled its writers to understand their revelation of God and to record it. The Bible is a record, but it is not a dead record of dead persons and events, but a record inspired by the living Spirit who uses it to speak to men now... It is the medium through which the living God now makes himself known. But to find in it the Spirit of God the reader must himself have that Spirit" - Marcus Dods.

1. The reader must be born again John 3
2. The reader must have a passion for Gods Word and to know Gods Word.
3. There must be a deep reverence for God. Meekness, humility and patience are prime virtues for understanding the Word.
4. Utter dependence on the Holy Spirit to guide and direct. 'To pray well is to study well.'

**NOTE:** Do not confuse inspiration with illumination. The Spirit does not communicate to the mind of even a teachable, obedient and devout Christian any doctrine or meaning of Scripture which is not contained already in Scripture itself. He makes men wise up to what is written - NOT BEYOND IT.

#### 4] Equipment.

1. Hebrew and Greek text (latest editions)
2. Standard grammars, lexicons of Hebrew and Greek.
3. Concordances.
4. Commentaries.
5. Bible dictionaries and encyclopaedias.
6. Bible atlas.

#### HISTORY AND PROTESTANT SYSTEM.

- i. **DEFINITION OF HISTORY OF HERMENEUTICS.** We must distinguish between the history of hermeneutics as a science and the history of hermeneutical principles. Science began in 1567 AD when FLACIOUS ILLYRICUS made the first attempt at a scientific treatment. The principles go back to EZRA.

We look for the answer to 3 questions.

1. What was the prevailing view respecting scripture?
  2. What was the main method of interpretation?
  3. What qualifications were regarded as essential in an interpreter of the Bible?
- ii. **TWO COMMON MISTAKES.**
    1. Provincialism = believing that the system in which one has been trained is the only system.
    2. Traditionalism = assumes that certain traditional or familiar interpretations are the only adequate interpretations.

## Lesson 2

# [1] BASIC SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION.

There are many schools of interpretation but I have chosen five which I think are the most popular today and easy to understand.

1. **ALLEGORISM.** This believes that beneath the **LETTER (RHETE)** or the obvious (**PHANERA**) is the **REAL** meaning (**HYPONIA**) of the passage. Allegory = extended metaphor. There is literal allegory which is intentional constructed by the author to tell a message under historical forms. Writers normally give a clue e.g. Pilgrims Progress. But we presume the document has a secret meaning (**HYPONIA**) and there are no clues then interpretation is very difficult.
2. **LITERALISM.** This method accepts as basic the literal meaning of the sentence unless by virtue of the nature of the sentence or phrase or clause within the sentence that it is not possible e.g. Figures of speech, fables, allegories do not admit to literal interpretation. The spirit of literal interpretation is that we should be satisfied with the literal meaning of a text unless very substantial reasons can be given for advancing beyond literal meaning.
3. **DEVOTIONALISM.** This places emphasis on the edifying aspects of Scripture, and interpretation with the intention of developing the spiritual life - **SPIRITUALISM.** Gives way to mystical experience was very popular in medieval period. Some are called **PIETISTS.** Not wrong to say average Christian reads the Bible in the devotional tradition i.e. for his or her own blessing and spiritual food.

Two weaknesses

- a) Falls pray to allegorisation especially OT where the Primary meaning of the passage is obscured.
- b) Devotional interpretations may be a substitute for the req- uisite exegetical and doctrinal studies of the Bible.

4. LIBERALISM. Rationalism in Biblical studies boils down to the fundamental assertion that whatever is not in harmony with educated mentality is rejected. reached its full tide in 19th Cent. Now most theological colleges have accepted this in full for part.
5. NEO-ORTHODOXY. Neo = adding to. This was ushered in by Karl Barth at the end of World War 1. Brings together all kinds of bits and pieces. Part of this is EXISTENTIALISM = an anti-intellectualism, a philosophy of life based on the assumption that reality can only be lived but can never become the object of thought.

## [2] THE PROTESTANT SYSTEM.

1. Inspiration - The Foundation. With the Jews Protestants accept the inspiration of the OT. With the R.C.'s and Eastern Orthodox Church we accept the inspiration of the NT. We differ from the Orthodox groups in rejecting the Apocrypha. We differ from the classicists in that they have no inspired MSS.

Inspired documents give a new dimension.

- i. It has a moral or spiritual aspect.
  - ii. It is supernatural.
  - iii. It is a revelation - in accepting the full inspiration of scripture we sever company with all rationalism.
2. Edification - The Goal. Along with inspiration we take the great purpose of the Bible. To produce a spiritual effect in the lives of those who read it. St. Augustine. "The Guide of interpretation was love. Love to God and love to man."

The Bible is not an end it is a means.

1. It makes us wise to salvation.
2. It benefits our Christian lives 2 Tim 3:15-17.

## Lesson 3

# THE HISTORIC PROTESTANT SYSTEM.

1. LITERAL
2. CULTURAL
3. CRITICAL.

What does LITERAL mean?

IT IS NOT.

1. Letterism = the exaggerated importance of the insignificant elements of grammar and spelling.
2. Metaphysical or Philosophical = belief that words signify things directly and to express a given thought one and only one set of words may be used.
3. Drab or flat in relation to the meaning of the Bible.

< proper customary usual, normal, their in sentences and words interpreting than less or more nothing is sense) this (in literally interpret to So word. that of meaning literal the word a designation socially-acknowledged MEANS="The"> Think how do children learn to speak? We can create our own individual designation if we want to - we could say to someone "I must check my elephant to see if it is correct." Your friends would wonder if you were right in the head. You can call your watch an elephant if you want to but you immediately have problems communicating with other. So -

**The customary socially-acknowledged designation of a word is the literal meaning of that word.**

So to interpret literally (in this sense) is nothing more or less than interpreting words and sentences in their normal, usual, customary, proper designation. The major issue is not between a narrow, unimaginative, wooden literalism or a fanciful imaginative allegorical system. The basic issue is whether the Biblical

documents are to be approached in the normal customary usual way in which people talk, write and think, or whether that level is only primary or preliminary to a second deeper level.

#### DEFENCE OF A LITERAL APPROACH.

- a. The literal method of interpretation is the usual practice in the interpretation of literature. We do this when we read any other book. Despite any deeper meaning we start to interpret literally.
- b. All secondary meanings of documents depend upon the previous meaning of these documents, namely upon their literal interpretation. Sowers do benefit from knowing something about farming. The Lion (in figurative use a symbol of strength) is derived from real lions. Incense (in figurative use a symbol of prayer - see Revelation 5:8) is derived from a sweet aroma that goes heavenwards.
- c. A large part of the Bible makes adequate and significant sense when literally interpreted. Great doctrines rest on literal understanding. Historical books make sense as history. Apart from parts of Revelation we should take all the Bible literally. It is important to stress that the literal interpretation of Scripture does not blindly rule out figures of speech, symbols, allegories and types.

**The literal meaning of a figure of speech is its proper meaning.**

See Hosea 7:8 "*Ephraim is a cake not turned*" in other words Ephraim is half baked!. The literal meaning is the intention of the metaphor.

*"I am the true vine"* John 15:1. The literal meaning here is the intention of the imagery employed.

- d. The literal method is the necessary check upon the imagination of men. Some church practices are based on an allegorical interpretation of passages in the Old Testament, that have nothing to do with New Testament church practice. Some spiritualise the Lord's teaching no one knows where they are.

**Here then is a proven method of control to stop men taking the Bible and making it mean anything they wish.**

CULTURAL MEANS = The total ways, methods, manners, tools and institutions with which a given people or tribe or nation carry on their existence - this also includes their history.

Some church groups say "An inspired book requires an infallible interpreter" thus saying only the church can interpret. As more light was shed on the Bible men came to realise they had the laws of the understanding of language. Many modern groups do not accept this and want to divorce the language of the New Testament (common Greek) from its culture.

The Interpreter must study.

1. Biblical geography - to try to interpret the Bible without a basic geographical understanding of Bible lands is like trying to watch a play with no scenery. A Bible Atlas is a must for any student of the Bible.
2. Biblical history - from clay tablets and monuments, from inscriptions and papyri fragments ancient history is re-constructed. History with geography sets the stage of Biblical interpretation.
3. Biblical culture - Culture is generally divided into two parts Material and Social. Material are things, tools, objects, dwellings, weapons, garments etc. Social is customs, practices e.g. marriage rites, burial rites, etc. etc.

CRITICAL MEANS = Any interpretation of Scripture must have adequate justification. The grounds of interpretation must be made explicit. The truest interpretations are those with the best justification.

Here we can appeal to history, grammar, culture, geography.

We must be careful of church dogma that says one thing when Scripture clearly teaches another. Water in John 3:5 is a good illustration. Some says this is baptism. The text is now closed up and there is no more room for study.

The Critical approach is opposed to highly personal interpretations. You may have heard a speaker say "Now this is my earnest conviction that....."

"I know scholars differ but it seem clear to me"

"I put away all books of human origin and read the pure word and the Holy Spirit showed me."

We know that devout God fearing men said the Lord would come before 1940.

C>H> Spurgeon said "the church cannot even speculate which century."

Here is a very important question "Does the Holy Spirit tell one - one thing and - another, another?" In some circles there can be distressing pressure that if a man is yielded to the Holy Spirit the interpretation must be correct.

### **Keep in Mind**

1. The Holy Spirit gives nobody an infallible interpretation.
2. Piety is a help to interpretation but not a substitute for knowledge, study and intelligence.
3. We are all human and subject to human limitations - it is easy to follow your favourite Bible teacher without really checking what they are teaching.



# PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION.

## 1. **The Priority of the Original Languages.**

If we do not work in the original language we have no method of judging the accuracy of a translation. We cannot establish the great doctrines of our faith on any basis less than the original language. (This is more acute if the heretic knows the language and we do not) Examples of misunderstanding from AV John 15:2 'takes away' Heb 7:26 'For such an high priest became us' Heb 7:3 'without descent'.

## 2. **The Accommodation of Revelation.**

The Bible is the truth of God accommodated to the human mind for its proper assimilation. The Bible is written in terms of human environment. To have meaning the revelation had to come in human languages in human thought-forms and referring to object of human experience. Parables are a classic example. The human and earthly vehicle is the bearer of spiritual truth. Our understanding of the spiritual world is ANALOGICAL. The question as to whether descriptions of hell or heaven are literal or symbolic is not the point. The point is that they are VALID DESCRIPTIONS of inescapable realities.

## 3. **Progressive Revelation.**

This does not mean the evolving of religion. It means the Bible sets forth a movement of God with the initiative coming from God and not man. God brings man up through theological infancy of the OT to maturity of the NT.

1. The OT was uneven in its progress through TIME. Revelation came sporadically.
2. METHOD of revelation varies greatly. The law was written by the finger of God. Balaam rebuked by the voice of an ass.
3. PERIOD of this revelation was from mans infancy to God speaking through his Son. We cannot force the OT into modern light of morality. Augustine 'Distinguish the times and you will harmonise Scripture'.

## 4. **Historical Propriety.**

This means we must have some sense as to what men may or may not have believed in any great centre of Biblical revelation. 'The true sense of the Bible cannot be found in an idea or thought historically untrue' MAAS.

## 5. **Of Ignorance.**

Farrar cites the Talmudic proverb 'Teach thy tongue to say, I do not know.' Speech occurs within the context of conversation. Meanings of given sentences

depends on the context of conversation. We get sentences without the full context. This is difficult to grasp, language is complex, grammar is the same. We have to rely on extra Biblical material to understand. 1 Cor 15:29 has over 30 interpretations Heb 6:1-9 over 10. Still to be rescued from obscurity Swords in Luke 22:38. Bodies in Matt 27:52. Azazel in Lev 16:26.

6. **Of differentiating Interpretation from Application.**

Interpretation is ONE. Application may be MANY. Clear from Scripture there are moral applications of the Scripture. Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:6 & 11; 2 Tim 3:16. Applications are NOT interpretations and must not be that status. DANGER - to interpret a passage so as to derive an application from it.

7. **The Checking Principle.**

Here we save ourselves from our own blind spots, peculiarities, pitfalls. This improves our work, fills in our imperfect knowledge.

1. Check results with secular studies if the passage borders on matters of science or history.
2. Check with great doctrinal documents to see if we have kept the rule of faith.
3. Check with great expositors of the past.

"you are not such wiseacres as to think or say that you can expound Scriptures without assistance from the works of divines and learned men, who have laboured before you in the field of exposition. It seems odd, that certain men who talk much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves, should think so little of what he has revealed to others."  
SPURGEON.

8. **Induction.**

In our interpretation of Scripture we must discover the meaning of a passage, not give it a meaning. 'The best teacher is the one who does not bring his meaning into Scripture, but brings it out of the Scripture.' LUTHER.

1. EXEGESIS = bringing the meaning of a text to the surface.
2. EISEGESIS = reading our own ideas into the text.

Let Scripture speak for itself. Happy is the man who can approach the Bible free from any prejudice or bias.

**'Do not play with Scripture as with a tennis ball.' CALVIN.**

Be humble learners not controversialists or dogmatists.

9. **Preference for the Clearest Interpretation.**

Possible to have two or more equally probably interpretations as far as grammatical rules permit

One strains our credulity. The other does not.  
One meaning is rather obvious. The other is not.  
RULE = Choose the clear one.

**OBSCURE PASSAGES MUST GIVE RIGHT OF WAY TO  
CLEAR PASSAGES.**

Everything essential to salvation and Christian living is clearly revealed in Scripture.

DANGER 'A doctrine is formulated within an ecclesiastical tradition, a verse in Scripture is found which sounds like it, and the doctrine is pronounced Scriptural.'

**10. Of the Unity of the Sense of Scripture.**

The meaning of Scripture is one. When more than one sense is imposed the meaning is unclear and obscured. The early church fathers were fond of Spiritualizing, symbolising, typifying. The unity of the sense of Scripture does not intend to deny that there is figurative language in the Bible.

**11. Of the Analogy of Faith.**

Comes in through the Reformation. 'SCRIPTURE INTERPRETS SCRIPTURE' (This came in to refute the church which said "The church itself is the only interpreter of Scripture) So the Bible was given to the common man. We interpret the Bible as one whole, one harmonious system of doctrine. This stops us playing off one against another.

Jesus v Paul. Paul v James.

## Lesson 5

We continue to narrow down our study to the construction of the very text itself at the same time continuing to assume full inspiration of both Canon and Text of Scripture.

### AN INTERESTING NOTE

CHAPTER AND VERSE DIVISIONS. For the purpose of reference they are invaluable, but very young compared to the writing of the Bible. It was generally accepted that Cardinal Hugo put the Bible into chapters around the year 1250. Further light has shown that this was done by Stephen Langton Archbishop of Canterbury in 1227. Mordecai Nathan put the Old Testament in verses in 1445 and Robert Stephen the New Testament in 1551. I like Bernard Ramm's comment that "at times we could be forgiven for thinking they nodded off"

PUNCTUATION. - Hebrew writing was unpunctuated. Also it has no vowels. A system of vowel signs was invented during the 7th Cent AD. and from that time punctuation started. Early Greek was also written without punctuation. See MSS in the British Museum - show no punctuation and are written in capital letters with no spaces between the words. Punctuation gradually came into Greek writing and we accept it.

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### TEXTUAL PRINCIPLES.

#### 1. THE STUDY OF WORDS.

Words are the unity of thought, and bricks of conceptual construction. Any study of the Bible must begin with a study of words, and words may be studied in different ways. Words may be studied

1. ETYMOLOGICALLY = word formation and sense development. Best done with a lexicon, this adds insight as to the meaning of the word. For example hell as derived from the word Hades literally means invisible, It is composed of an alpha prefix which is always in the negative means without and then the verb to see so to write it literally we would write "without seeing" or invisible, we know it as the abode of departed spirits. But the word hell as derived from Gehenna has no etymological derivation in the Greek as it comes from the Hebrew. It actually refers to a place name, the rubbish tip of Jerusalem in the time of Christ. The valley of Hinnom or Gehenna in the time of the prophets see Jeremiah 32:35. The word Paradise is an interesting word when we search it out we find it comes from the Persian so again we cannot be helped by its etymology. It has the meaning beautiful garden,. The meaning of the word Bishop is an overseer, the word is made up of over and to look There are many profitable hours in studying the etymology of words

2. **COMPARATIVELY.** Best done with a Concordance, reveals how many times the word is used, what authors used it, the various meanings of the word. With this in mind I find Young's Analytical Concordance the best. At the back of Young's is the Analytical section. This gives a list of words used. First you need to know the word you are looking for in the original language - you get this from the main concordance. Then look up the word in the analytical section and you will see how many times the word is used under its different words. You can then look up these words back in the main section and see how they appear in context. This is a most useful tool. Let's look at the word Spirit on searching you find it means an evil spirit; the human spirit; the proper inner attitude and the Holy Spirit but we find it also means breath, wind in its Old Testament usage.

In this respect we should study **SYNONYMS** = a word having the same meaning, words used to give the same sense of meaning. These studies help us to discover what words are used as equivalents. In the gospels there are many instances where one writer uses one word or expression, and the next one another, and yet they are used so as to leave the clear impression that they are equivalents. See Matthew 20:21 which speaks of Christ being seated in His Kingdom. Mark 10:37 here Christ is spoken of as seated in His Glory. Hence to be seated in His Kingdom and His glory are equivalent.

3. **HISTORICALLY.** Words have a history or historical cultural reference. This actually enriches our understanding of the word. When Christ mentions "going the extra mile" on Matthew 5:41. He is referring to the well-known Persian custom. When a Persian messenger carried the message of the empire he would compel inhabitants of a locality to carry his baggage one mile, or to perform any task the messenger commanded. These are not only interesting but make good illustrations in preaching. It is important not to read our own theological meaning into a word but to spend the time and search out the meanings of the words during the Old and New Testament times.
4. **COGNATE LANGUAGE.** Books are available to help us understand studies in Arabic and Aramaic languages these help clear up some of the obscurities in the Hebrew. Clay tablets from Egypt right through to Babylonia having shed great light on the Bible. The Septuagint (LXX) is invaluable in discovering what Greek words the translators considered as parallel to Hebrew words

## 2. **GRAMMATICAL INTERPRETATION.**

If words are the bricks of thought then sentences are the **UNIT** of thought. Complexities of thought must be expressed in sentences. Grammar states the principles which arrange the formation of words into meaningful sentences. We need a working knowledge of English grammar. Need to know verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, pronouns etc. etc. We should know the grammatical concepts of - number, gender, case, mood, tense etc. etc. There is great value in paying attention to grammatical details. Tenbse for instance generally refers to local in time, or state of completion or of existence in time.

Look at John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word" "was" is in the imperfect tense. The imperfect tense implies a precious state and its continuance. So we should read it like this "In the beginning the Word had been existing and is still existing. John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh" "became" is an aorist, which means the completion of an event in historical time. So we know that a point in history was the incarnation of God in Christ.

### 3. CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION.

"To interpret without regard to the context is to interpret at random; to interpret contrary to the context is to teach falsehood for truth." Barrows.

## **A TEXT OUT OF CONTEXT IS A PRETEXT**

Words need sentences, sentences need CONTEXT. Ask yourself - WHAT COMES BEFORE AND WHAT COMES AFTER.

- Culture of context
- Bible context
- Specific book context
- The context itself

### 4. INTERPRETING ACCORDING TO THE LITERARY MOLD.

The Spirit of God in the inspiration of scripture chose to use a variety of types of literature.

- i. POETIC - poetry has some rules of self, Hebrew poetry has many of its own. Understand poetic license.
- ii. DRAMATIC - Job is a combination of poetic and dramatic, a wooden approach yields nothing.
- iii. HISTORY - Book of Acts etc.
- iv. BIOGRAPHY - Gospels.
- v. LETTERS - Epistles.

### 5. PROPER USE OF CROSS REFERENCES.

Same topic can occur in 2 or more places, we can gather information from both.

- Verbal cross reference these contain the same word or expression. Not all are valid. There are Real & Apparent.
- Conceptual means it does not contain the same word but same substance.
- Parallel, a passage in one book which recounts the same event or material in another part of the book.

## Lesson 6

# The Interpretation of Figurative Language.

This is an area which has caused much mis-interpretation over the centuries. Literal interpretation does not mean that the interpretation has to be boring or wooden or even painful. There are some who hold to the unbending literal rendition of every word or phrase in the Bible.

The LITERAL interpretation readily admits the very large place which figurative language has in Scripture. "It is not true that the literalist require every single passage to be interpreted literally without exception."  
FEINBERG.

Whenever a figure of speech is used in the Bible its literal meaning is precisely that meaning determined by grammatical studies of figures of speech. Unger remarks that

"Figurative language is, therefore to be thought of as an ally and not an enemy of literal interpretation, and as a help to it and not a hindrance"

A figure of speech relates to the form in which the words are used. It consists in the fact that a word or words are used out of their ordinary sense, or place, or manner, for the purpose of attracting our attention to what is thus said. Figures are never used but for the sake of emphasis, They can never be ignored. Ignorance of figures of speech has led to the greatest errors and liberties being taken with Holy Scripture. The Greeks and Romans named some hundreds of figures of speech. They divide into three categories.

- omission
- addition
- alteration or change of a word, or words, or their sense

**IT IS THE TRUTH WHICH IS LITERAL, WHILE THE WORDS EMPLOYED ARE FIGURATIVE.**

I have included in the glossary some of the more common [Figures of Speech](#). For longer lists I would direct you to the "Companion Bible" which lists 181 or to any good dictionary.

"The figures of the Bible are employed not simply to please the imagination and excite the feelings but to teach eternal verities." Barrows

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# The Interpretation of Types

TYPES - Critics say typology is forced exegesis rather than an interpretation rising naturally out of the Scripture. It is seldom heard today - the preaching of types. And yet the Bible is full of them. This was a method used by Christ and some of the dearest truths he teaches are taught by type.

Look at John 3 verse 14. You will remember from the Homiletic notes that we find the two key words AS and SO - here the Lord takes the serpent in the wilderness and compares it to Himself - yet to be crucified. The Serpent is the type and Christ Himself is the antitype. Another one to examine is Matthew 12:40

God reveals Himself not only in word but in facts. The words explain the facts, and the facts give concrete embodiment to the words. As we interpret we must discover the underlying meaning of such facts.

## 1. FACTS MAY HAVE A SYMBOLICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

Historical facts or events may serve as symbols of spiritual truth. A symbol (from SUN AND BALLO) is not an image but a sign of something else.

## 2. FACTS MAY HAVE TYPICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

What is a type? Greek TUPOS from verb TUPTO.

Denotes

1. the mark of a blow.
2. an impression the stamp made by a die, hence a figure or image.
3. an example or pattern - this is the most common use.

- Both types and symbols are indicative of something else.
- A symbol is a sign.
- A type is a pattern or image.
- Symbol - can refer to something past, present or future.

TYPES - always refer to some future reality. Typical persons, places things, rites, facts.

## THREE CHARACTERISTICS.

- i. There must be some notable real point of resemblance between the type and antitype. Whatever differences there may be, the former should be a true picture of the latter in some particular point.
- ii. The type must be designed by divine appointment to bear a likeness to the antitype. Accidental similarity between OT person and NT person does not constitute a type.
- iii. A type always pre-figures something future. Different from a symbol. OT types were at the same time symbols that conveyed spiritual truths to contemporaries.



Symbolic meaning must be understood before their typical meaning can be ascertained.

Things to look for in your interpretation of Types.

Type = Something or someone representative.

Antitype = That which is prefigured by the type.

General rules always apply.

1. Cannot regard a thing that is itself evil as a type of what is good. It jars our moral sense. e.g. Clothes of Esau in which Jacob was dressed as a type of righteousness with which Christ adorns His saints. Gal 4:22-31, similar antitypes.
2. Proper understanding of a type lies through the study of a symbol. What is the moral and spiritual truth conveyed? To Israelites. When this is answered satisfactorily do we proceed to the further query as to how the truth was realised on a higher plain in NT. To reverse the process is wrong. Brazen Serpent made of 'inferior' metal which means Christ's outer meanness or humble appearance. Dim lustre which is a prefiguration of the veil of His human nature.
3. Must turn to NT for real interpretation. Veil taken away in NT. If prophecies can only be understood by their fulfilment in NT SO types. Notice how much additional light is shed on the tabernacle by Hebrews.
4. Fundamental Types which are not of a complex nature, have but one radical meaning. We are not at liberty to multiply. Red Sea = type of baptism NOT atoning blood of Christ or trials of the church. Some types do have more than one fulfilment in NT
5. Have due regard for types and antitypes. Truth on a lower level can be Carnal. Same truth on a higher level can be Spiritual Roman Catholic mass is taken from Old Testament sacrifices.  
Apostolic succession, priests, bishops, and the Pope from OT priesthood.

## Lesson 7

### The Interpretation of Parables

A Parable is a method of speech in which moral or religious truth is illustrated from the analogy of common experience. The comparison is best expressed by the word LIKE. An important part of our Lord's teaching was by means of parables; and when Scriptures parables are spoken of generally those of the Lord are meant. Christ used this method of teaching at every part of his public ministry. (Mark 3:23; Luke 6:29; 7:40-50) There are some 39 parables in the Gospels.

The etymological meaning of the word PARABLE = a placing alongside of for purpose of comparison. The Greek word is PARABOLE. It is a method of illustration. "The kingdom of heaven is illustrated by the following situation." In the Greek we have also PAROIMIA = a saying by the wayside, a proverb, a maxim. (This word is restricted to John's gospel)

Dodd "a parable at its simplest is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer, by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application as to rouse it into active thought."

#### **Differs from:-**

- Fable - not trivial or fantastic.
- Myth - not a creation of popular folklore.
- Allegory - which finds meaning at many points of the narrative.

The intention of teaching is given by the Lord in Matt 13:11-17; Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:8-10.

The statement in the above passages as to parables has been interpreted to mean that the Lord clothed the truths of the Kingdom in images in order to make them more intelligible to his hearers and to impress them indelibly on their memory. But this was true of a certain class of hearers only and in many cases, even in respect to them, only after the parable had been explained. The truth was hidden from those who heard without repentance or sincere interest in entering the Kingdom.

- a. It is a method of teaching responsive disciples - 'He that has ears' They were to know the mysteries of the kingdom. They are the SINE QUA NON MATERIAL FOR INTELLIGENT CHRISTIAN SERVICE.
- b. They hide the truth from unresponsive and aid the hardening of the heart Ish 6:9. Truth is veiled to test the persons responsiveness, has he a spiritual intention to follow through?

PARABLES are:-

1. EARTHLY
2. SPIRITUAL LESSONS.

A study of the literature of the parables reveals that the parables are not as easy to interpret as their simple nature suggests.

### **RULES**

1. PERSPECTIVE PRINCIPLE. We must understand them in their relationship to Christ- ology and the kingdom of God. Jesus is teaching about Himself and His kingdom. In some He is the leading figure. ASK - how does this parable relate to Christ? All deal with one great subject the kingdom of God.
  - i. The kingdom has come. Entered by the new birth John 3:3 See Matt 21:31. Tax collectors and harlots. Being here it continues, Parables of the kingdom were prophecies of the kingdom. Sower/reaping. Great net etc.
  - ii. The kingdom is eschatological in character. There is to be a harvest at the end of the age. Final issues have not been settled. Talents Matt 25:4. Virgins Matt 25.
2. THE CULTURAL PRINCIPLE. Our Lord lived in Palestine, He was a Jew, He spoke Aramaic. Note the local colour.
3. EXEGETICAL PRINCIPLES.
  - i. Determine the one central truth each parable is attempting to teach. GOLDEN RULE - A parable is a truth carried in a vehicle. There are accessories necessary for the drapery of the parable, but are not part of the meaning.
  - ii. Determine how much of the parable is interpreted by the Lord Himself. Sower Matt 25:13.
  - iii. Determine whether there are any clues in the context concerning the parables meaning. BEFORE and AFTER.
  - iv. The comparative rule. Compare with any OT association, with other gospels. Look for gospel harmony.
  - v. Doctrinal principle. Any use of doctrine must observe history.

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## **Prophecy.**

Girdlestone (The Grammar of Prophecy) "There is no royal road to the scientific study of prophecy."

There are many roads indicated but none so obvious as to have the total assent of scholars.

**THE COMMON IMPRESSION IS THAT PROPHECY IS PREDICTIVE.**

Prophets in Scripture spoke forth a message for God. They were

## 'FORTH-TELLERS'

more than they were

## 'FORE-TELLERS'

FORTH-TELLING = They were to listen to God and then speak. Ex 7:1. Aaron did not deliver his own message. Samuel had a school. There were plenty of false prophets around. Some were writing prophets.

FORE-TELLING = As part of the message some was predictive. e.g. Captivity/Deportation/Return/Messiah.

### 1. FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.

It is wrong to think each prophecy has a single fulfilment.

- i. Immediate reference = partial fulfilment.
- ii. Ultimate reference = complete fulfilment.  
Gen 15:5; Ex32:13; Deut 1:10-11; Gal 6:16; Gal 3:8-9; Rom 4:16-17; Gen 49:10 - 'The sceptre will not depart from Judah.'  
Immediate fulfilment found in the preservation of the Davidic kingship in spite of Solomon and the division of the kingdom up to Babylon.  
Ultimate fulfilment found in Luke 1:33.  
Matt 24. 40 years to AD70. Talks of the end of time.

### 2. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE - see glossary for figures of speech.

### 3. PECULIAR LANGUAGE

- i. Things yet far in the future are sometimes spoken of as though they had already happened Ish 9:6. Ish 53:3-4  
ALL the verbs are in the past tense = PROPHETIC PERFECT. These emphasise the certainty of the predictions see Rom 8:30.
- ii. Two or more events which in their fulfilment may be separated by long periods of time are sometimes foretold as though they belonged together in one verse or paragraph Ish 61:2; Joel 2:29-31; Acts 2:16-17; Zech 9:9-10.

## RULES

3. Find out as much as you can about the circumstances in which the prophet proclaimed his message.
4. Take care to interpret the prophets use of figurative language correctly.
5. Before deciding seek parallel or similar passages to throw light on one another. The Branch has 6 passages.
6. Are predictions fulfilled in the gospels or the early church?
7. Study the way in which the Lord and His apostles interpreted OT predictions and what use they made of them.

All spoke and wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Their methods of inspiration were inspired and we neglect them at our peril.

### **DIFFERENT METHODS OF INTERPRETATION.**

- SPIRITUAL. Not all appear literal. Our Lord and apostles quoted the Old Testament. They appeared to follow this method. Some extremist say no prophecies regarding Israel are left to be fulfilled. The church takes over. Why Israel? Why use Hebrew?
- LITERALIST. Wherever possible this is the method. The Bible means what it says and says what it means. Are we to have a literal rebuilding of Babylon? A temple with animal sacrifices? Acts 1:7 who knows the dates.

## Lesson 8

# THE DOCTRINAL AND DEVOTIONAL USE OF THE BIBLE

Part of the task of hermeneutics is to determine the correct use of the Bible in our lives.

### **DOCTRINE.**

The Bible contains the knowledge of God - expressed as teaching (DIDACHE.) Biblical religion is not merely religious experience, nor are its teachings religious speculation. Biblical religion is grounded in the objective knowledge of God. The Bible is not a "theological Euclid" or storehouse of intellectual propositions about God - commonly called Revelational Theism. We believe that Scripture is capable of theological interpretation. The Lord made teaching one of the great items of the Great Commission Matt 28:19-20.

### **PRINCIPLES THAT GOVERN DOCTRINAL HERMENEUTICS**

1. The Theologian is a Redeemed man standing in the circle of divine revelation  
He is a changed man, he has undergone regeneration. He is a committed man, he has found the truth, the way we treat the Bible is different it is not handbook but our only source of light for right living.
2. The main burden of doctrinal teaching must rest on the literal interpretation of the Bible  
You cannot spiritualize the Bible in general hermeneutics, it so follows you cannot for doctrine. The Levitical priesthood is no justification for a clergy-priesthood.
3. The main burden of our theology should rest on the teaching of the New Testament  
This is the final, full and clear revelation of God. The OT is the seed out of which the NEW came but can never be used for NT church doctrine. Hebrews 8:13
4. Exegesis is prior to any system of theology  
The Scriptures are themselves the divine disclosure. From them is derived our system of theology. Taking other philosophies and adding bits of Christianity has done great harm.
5. The theologian must not extend his doctrines beyond Scriptural evidence  
We cannot go off into flights of fancy. The evidence of Scripture is themselves. Many questions are asked about heaven. What will we eat? wear? do babies grow up? What language will we speak? The answer is not the most clever nor the most sentimental, but the one within the limitations of the Biblical data on these subjects.

6. The theological interpreter strives for a system  
Systematic theology leads us to understand the full revelation of God. As there is a unity in the Bible - there is unity in systematic theology.
7. The theologian must use his proofs texts with proper understanding of his procedure  
This can be difficult. We do not just remember a list of texts but each proof text should be underwritten by a sound knowledge. Zeph 3:9 in AV.
8. What is not a matter of revelation cannot be made a matter of creed or faith  
It is our heritage that only what is taught in Scripture is directly binding to conscience. Some churches seek to add to the Bible and bind people. Sects have 'official handbooks' that become greater than the Bible.
9. The interpreter must keep the practical nature of the Bible in mind  
The intention of the Bible is to supply man with a knowledge of salvation 2 Tim 3:15 And also what is necessary for a godly Christian life 3:16-17. Only what is in some way related to these two items is discussed in Scripture.
10. The theological interpreter must recognize his responsibility to the church  
The issues proposed in scripture are the greatest in man's entire range of knowledge Hell; Heaven; Salvation etc. James 1:3 informs us that there should be few teachers because the condemnation of a teacher - if he leads the flock astray - is great. Millions believe the basic historic gospel - no man has a right to shake that confidence.

"If the scripture be a plain book, and the Spirit performs the function of a teacher to all the children of God, it follows inevitably that they must agree in all essential matters in their interpretation of the Bible. And from that fact it follows that for an individual Christian to dissent from the universal church (i.e. the body of true believers) is tantamount to dissenting from scripture themselves." Hodge.

11. No doctrine should be constructed from an uncertain textual reading  
Doctrine should come from those passages about which textual criticism has raised no doubt. Mark 16:18??

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## DEVOTIONAL USE OF THE BIBLE.

**1st Purpose is 2 Tim 3:15 - - Final purpose is 2 Tim 3:16-17**

Doctrine and theology are primarily aimed at making sinners into saints and immature Christians into mature Christians.

1. All practical lessons, all applications of Scripture, all devotional material, must be governed by general Protestant hermeneutics The notorious dictum 'The end justifies the means' is frequently baptised into the Christian fold under the guise of: 'The blessing justifies the means.'

2. The Bible is more a book of principles than a catalogue of specific directions The emphasis is on moral and spiritual principles not upon specific and itemised list of rules.
3. The Bible emphasizes the inner spirit rather than the outward religious cloak

The OT had rules for food, clothing etc. aimed at teaching *discrimination*, to learn the right and wrong way. NT morality and spirituality are lifted to a higher level than being inward and spiritual. Measuring spirituality entirely by outward appearance is *not just* to the person being judged. Our Lord taught that true spirituality is a spiritual and secret activity.

4. In some statements it is the spirit of the statement that is to be our guide Matt 5:29-30; 18:21.
5. Commands in terms of one culture should be translated into our culture The only way our Lord and the Apostles could communicate was to speak in language of their culture 1 Tim 2:9.

### **GUIDANCE FROM EXAMPLES.**

We can learn from the great men of the Bible, also from sinful men.

- a. We must make a distinction between what the Bible records and what it approves. We frequently make the mistake of assuming that whatever is written in the Bible is thereby approved. The Bible is inspired but not all is the *will* of God.
- b. We may take direct application from all of the incidents that the Bible directly censures or approves. Ointment poured on Jesus. This is censured by Judas but approved by the Lord. Gal 2:11 Peter's behaviour at Antioch.
- c. Express commands to individuals are not the will of God for us. Abraham commanded to offer up his son not a standing order to all fathers. Joshua commanded to slay all - not a command for Christian soldiers. John 21:18-19.
- d. In the lives of men in the Scripture determine what the outstanding spiritual principle is. Heb 11. Do not find too much meaning in trivial details.
- e. In the application of examples to our lives we do not need a literal reproduction of the Biblical situations. Baptism need not be in the Jordan. The Lord's supper need not be in an upper room.

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### **PROMISES.**

Ask is every promise in the book mine? I'm reminded of the old chorus "Every promise in the book is mine, every chapter, every verse, every line." Might be a quaint chorus but it is just not true!

- Note whether the promise is universal in scope Rev 22:18
- Note whether the promise is personal Acts 18:9-10
- Note whether the promise is conditional James 4:8
- Note whether the promise is for our time Rev 2 & 3

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### **THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN PREACHING AND TEACHING.**



The preaching and teaching ministry in the church is applied hermeneutics. We can only declare our right to preach and teach as we are bound to the ministry of the word of God. The fundamental task of preaching is **not** to be clever, funny, sermonic or profound but to minister clearly the truth of God. The New Testament servant of Christ is not free to preach as he wishes but is found to minister the truth of Christ.

### **RULES**

1. The minister must realise he is a servant of the Lord and bound to the Word of God. His basic motivation in preaching must be to convey the truth of God's word. To publicly read the Bible 1 Tim 4:13; 1 Tim 3:2. He should **herald** and **preach** the word.
2. The preacher must use all Scripture in accordance with the rules of hermeneutics. Some preachers think they are exempt from hermeneutics. There is no such thing as 'poetic licence' in preaching. This does not mean that preaching is nothing but public exegesis or drab commenting on sacred text.

There must be ENERGY, LIFE, IMAGINATION,  
RELEVANCY, ILLUSTRATION and PASSION.