

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, April 8, 2015 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

ALL ABOUT THE BIBLE

How We Got the Bible – Interpretation

2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21, Matthew 7:24-27

2 Timothy 3:16-17

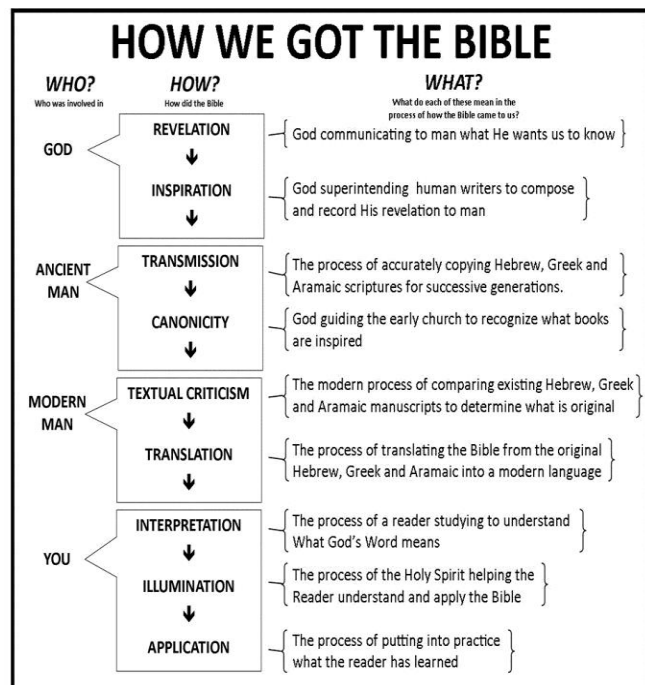
“¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

2 Peter 1:19-21

“¹⁹ We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” – 2 Peter 1:19-21 (NIV)

FOR REVIEW

So up to this point in our study we have looked at God’s revelation and inspiration, and we have examined how ancient man transmitted what God revealed and inspired him to write down for us, and then we took a look at how those writing were compiled and collected and determined to be the Word of God, and were recognize as the canon of scripture, the Bible. We have also examined the science of textual criticism and translation and the process by which we are able to determine what the original manuscripts of the Bible said and get them translated into our language... one that we can read and understand. Up to this point our study, “How We Got the Bible,” has centered on the technical and more



mechanical means by which God's Word came down to us, the process of us getting God's Word in our hands. We've looked at God's part, ancient man's part and modern man's part in the process.

INTRODUCTION

Our study on "How We Got the Bible" now will take a sharp turn into the more practical and applicable aspects of God's Word coming to us as final three chapters in our study focus on the very practical study of interpretation and how we personally interpret Scripture, illumination and the important part the Holy Spirit plays in our understanding of God's Word, and finally application and how God's Word moves from just being something we understand to something we live our in our daily lives. Let's get started with this very practical study of how we interpret Scripture.

Our key text for our study has been 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV) We have concerned ourselves, so far in our study with the first phase of our key text... that time span between "All Scripture" being "God-breathed" and it becoming "useful" or "profitable" for us. In other words, how did it get from God to us so that it can impact our lives. When we begin to talk about "interpretation" and us beginning to really understand God's Word we are now beginning to trek into that "Scripture" that is "God-breathed" actually becoming "useful" or "profitable" for "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant (man or woman) of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." It is not enough for us to know the mechanics of how we got God's Word if it does not translate into us realizing, internalizing, and living out what God's Word, that He gave us, says.

WHAT IS INTERPRETATION AND WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

A Definition: The term "interpretation" or "interpret" may carry with it various meanings in the English language. It can be a very "subjective" term such as an artist own interpretation of something that may vary from the photo-real, to surrealism, to the abstract. In other words our English word "interpret" or "interpretation" can be very subjective (personal, individual, idiosyncratic, slanted and biased)...our own personal interpretation. Our English word "interpret" or "interpretation" can also have a more precise and exact meaning... more objective (impartial, unprejudiced, factual, actual). Webster's Dictionary may define "interpret" or "interpretation" in one of two ways.

2 Dictionary Definition of Interpretation:

1. **Subjective** (*personal, individual, idiosyncratic, slanted and biased*) **dictionary definition of interpretation** – "*The act of conceiving in the light of individual belief, judgment, or circumstance, to represent by means of art*"
2. **Objective** (*impartial, unprejudiced, factual, actual*) **dictionary definition of interpretation** - "*The act of explaining or telling the meaning of something in understandable terms.*"

For the purposes of our study and when applying the term “interpretation” in the context of Biblical study the definition will always be the more objective English definition. A good definition for “interpretation” for the purposes of our study is...

Definition of Biblical Interpretation: *“The process of a reader studying to understand what God’s Word means.”*

God is capable of accurately relaying His Word to us in a way that we can understand. It is crucial that we interpret properly to determine the intended meaning rather than forcing ideas into the text.

Some Important Related Words: There are a couple of important words/phrases associated with Biblical interpretation that may sound technical and bit scholarly, academic and intellectual yet these words/phrases are essential to understanding good interpretation of Scripture and how to do it.

5 Important Words/Phrases in Biblical Interpretation:

1. **Hermeneutics** – *“The branch of theology that focuses on identifying and applying sound principles of biblical interpretation.”* *The word “hermeneutics” comes from the Greek word “hermeneuo,” which means to explain or interpret.
2. **Hermeneutical Principles** - *“The interpretative principles used and applied to correctly and accurately interpret Scripture.”*
3. **Exegesis** – *“To ‘read out of’ or interpret out of the text what the author intended it to mean.”* *In other words, exegesis is finding the AIM (Author’s Intended Meaning) of the passage because its true meaning is determined by the sender of the message, not the recipient.
4. **Eisegesis** – *“To ‘reads into’ the text one’s own ideas and thoughts—what the reader wants the text to mean.”*
5. **Historical-grammatical Approach** – *“An approach in hermeneutics that seeks to find the plain (literal) meaning of the words based on an understanding of the historical and cultural settings in which the book was written, and follow standard rules of grammar, according to the book’s particular genre, to arrive at an interpretation.”* *Bible-believing Christians generally follow this method of interpretation known as the historical-grammatical approach.

While the Bible is generally plain in its meaning, proper interpretation requires careful study and is not always an easy task. Consider that the Bible was written over a period of roughly 1,600 years by 40 or more authors using three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek). The authors wrote in different genres and had different vocabularies, personalities, cultural backgrounds, and social standings. The Holy Spirit moved each of these men to produce His inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21), but He allowed their various writing styles and personalities to be expressed in its pages. It was written in a culture very different from our modern world and has been translated from its original languages. These are just some of the factors that must be taken into account as we interpret... that make interpretation any given passage of Scripture a challenges.

In fact, Bible colleges and seminaries often require their students to complete a course in hermeneutics. Numerous books have been written to explain the principles of hermeneutics, and while Bible-believing Christians may disagree over particulars, there is general agreement about the major rules required to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Important Observation: This is not to claim that only the scholarly elite can correctly interpret the Bible. Various groups have wrongly held this position. William Tyndale lived in the early sixteenth century when only certain people were allowed to interpret the Bible, which was only available in Latin, not the language of the common man. He sought to bring God’s Word to the average person by translating it into English. Tyndale is credited with telling a priest that he could make a boy who drove a plough to know more of the Scripture than the priest himself.² The Bible was penned so that in its pages all people, even children, can learn about God and what He has done so that we can have a personal relationship with Him. We must also battle against our pride, which tempts us to think that our own views are always right or that the beliefs of a particular teacher are necessarily right. We must strive to be like the Bereans who were commended by Luke for searching the Old Testament Scriptures daily to make sure that what Paul taught was true (Acts 17:11). God desires for His people to know and understand His Word—that’s why He gave it to us and instructed fathers to teach it to their children in the home (Deuteronomy 6:4–9). However, we must keep in mind several important points.

Why Interpretation Is So Important?:

Jesus told something of a parable at the end of His great “Sermon on the Mount,” that is sometimes called “The Wise and Foolish Builders.” Take a look at Matthew 7:24-27,

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Jesus parable or teaching tells us why it is absolutely imperative that we not just hear God’s Word, but that we understand it and put it into practice. He is reinforcing the necessity of good and accurate Biblical interpretation so that we may know and practice what God says to us in His Word.

3 Things Good Biblical Interpretation Does For Us According Jesus: (according the parable of the wise and foolish builders)

- 1. It is a sign of wisdom**
- 2. It gives us a solid foundation for our life**
- 3. It helps us to face the challenges and struggles of life with victory and peace.**

The Bible is God’s Word, but some of the interpretations derived from it today are not. There are many cults and Christian groups that use the Bible... claiming “their interpretations” are correct. Too often, however, the interpretations not only differ dramatically but are clearly

contradictory. This does not mean that the Bible is a confusing document. Rather, the problem lies in those who interpret and the methods they use.

We need, as best as can be had, the guidance of the Holy Spirit in interpreting God's Word. Because we are sinners, we are incapable of interpreting God's word perfectly all of the time. We make mistakes. We often come at Scripture with our own faith presuppositions (assumptions) and prejudices. We try to make Scripture match up with our way of thinking, our beliefs and practices... in other words, we try to make Scripture match up with our theology rather than us matching up to Scriptures theology. The body, mind, will, and emotions are affected by sin and make 100% interpretive accuracy impossible. This does not mean, however, that accurate understanding of God's Word is impossible. But it does mean that we need to approach His Word in the right/correct way:

Some Basics in How To Approach the Word of God: *(there may best be identified as the prerequisites for coming to God's Word and seeking to correctly interpret it... if you don't come like this you won't correctly or accurately get at what it is saying)*

1. **Approach God's Word with reverence** – Don't treat God's Word as you would just any book. Remember that this is the very word of Holy God, the only God, the God who created everything out of nothing by mere spoken word... and He desires to speak to you through His Word. Therefore we should always approach God's Word with a certain "fear and trembling," with awe, and reverence.
2. **Approach God's Word with care** – Don't treat God's Word callously, carelessly, or as if you have it all figured out. I can assure you, you don't! When we say approach it with care, come at God's Word as a clean slate, teachable, ready to learn and ready to diligently dig in and dig deeper, and undeterred... I'm going to keep digging, researching and digging some more until I get at God's Word.
3. **Approach God's Word with humility** – This may go with the last one a bit, but again don't treat God's Word flippantly as if you have it all figured out. Be humble and teachable when you come to God's Word. Let God's Word speak for itself, don't try to impose your own ideas and belief on it. Be teachable and a clean slate!
4. **Approach God's Word with reason** – God gave you your brain... use it! Think! Reason through Scripture. Be ready to think and think deeply about what you read. Don't be content to just skim and casually glance through God's Word think on it, reason it, meditate on it! Let it soak in. Chew on it. Ask questions of it and of yourself in relation to it.
5. **Approach God's Word with the Holy Spirit** - Additionally, we need, as best as can be had, the guidance of the Holy Spirit in interpreting God's Word. After all, the Bible is inspired by God and is addressed to His people. The Holy Spirit helps us to understand what God's word means and how to apply it.

Again, the Bible is God's message to man and we can have perfect confidence that God is capable of accurately relaying His Word to us in a way that we can understand. As such, it is crucial that we learn how to interpret properly so that we can determine what Scripture is really saying.

An Important Acrostic To Remember in Biblical Interpretation A.I.M.:

A = Authors

I = Intended

M = Meaning

It is crucial that we learn how to interpret properly so that we can the Author's Intended Meaning (AIM) rather than forcing our own ideas into the text. That is the goal of Biblical interpretation, hermeneutics and the hermeneutical principles that help us to proper take A.I.M. at Scripture. A given document means what the author intended it to mean. The alternative would make communication futile. There would be no point in writing anything if the readers are simply going to take what they want from the passage, rather than what the writer intends. All communication is predicated on the presupposition that language conveys the author's or speaker's intention (unless, of course, the person is trying to deceive us, which is something God does not do since He wants us to understand His Word). On the human level, to lessen the errors that come in our interpretations, we need to look at some basic biblical interpretive methods.

WHAT ARE SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRATION?

On the human level, to lessen the errors that come in our interpretations, we need to look at some basic biblical interpretive methods. These are important principles for interpretation, though basic. Next week we will explore more deeply the hermeneutical principles that we alluded to earlier. For our purposes here and to briefly expose you to them I'll list some of the principles in the form of questions:

10 Basic Principles of Hermeneutics in Question Form:

- 1. Who wrote/spoke the passage and who was it addressed to?**
- 2. What does the passage say?**
- 3. Are there any words in the passage that need to be examined?**
- 4. What is the immediate context?**
- 5. What is the broader context in the chapter and book?**
- 6. What are the related verses to the passage's subject, and how do they affect the understanding of this passage?**
- 7. What is the historical and cultural background?**
- 8. What do I conclude about the passage?**
- 9. Do my conclusions agree or disagree with related areas of scripture and others who have studied the passage?**
- 10. What have I learned and what must I apply to my life?**

Concluding remarks

Since the goal of interpreting the Bible is to determine the Author's Intended Meaning (A.I.M.), we must follow principles that are derived from God's Word. Next week we will look more closely at the principles of hermeneutics and then discover some helpful tools that are readily available to us today that can help with good Biblical interpretation.

“Remember, the goal of interpreting God's Word is not to simply accumulate knowledge so that you can be the best at Bible trivia. The reason it is important to study and accurately interpret the Bible is so that we can know God better, know what He expects from us, and know how we can live in a way that pleases Him.”