

# How to Interpret the Bible

Travis Echols

Lesson 1. Introduction, History of Interpretation, and the Bible as God's Word

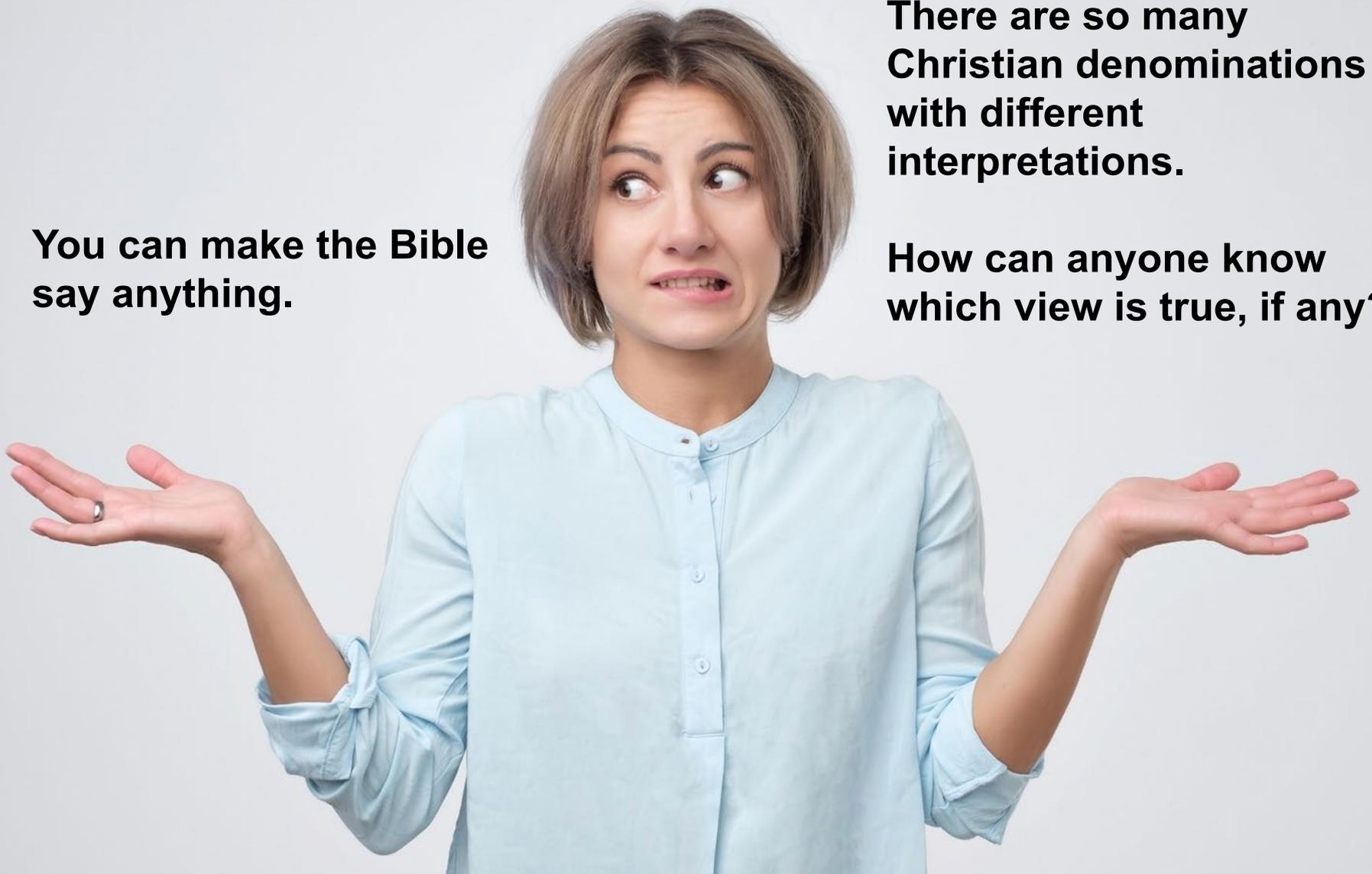


# How to Interpret the Bible

**You can make the Bible say anything.**

**There are so many Christian denominations with different interpretations.**

**How can anyone know which view is true, if any?**



# How to Interpret the Bible

## Six-week course outline

### 5 Principles to Follow

1. The text should be read in its normal sense
2. The word of God is logical
3. All the different types of language used in Scripture presuppose that there is a reality described
4. Interpret personal experiences in light of Scripture, not vice versa
5. The Scripture has one meaning, but it has many applications

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Six-week course outline

### 8 Errors to Avoid

1. Psychoanalysis fallacy
2. Word study fallacies
3. Error of allegorizing
4. Error of spiritualizing
5. Error of moralizing
6. Error of focusing on “the facts”
7. Error of imitating Bible characters
8. Confusing the role of the Holy Spirit

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Six-week course outline



1. Introduction, History of Interpretation, and the Bible as God's Word (pages 1-12)\*
2. Textual Criticism and Bible Translations (13-28)
3. Five Principles of Interpretation (29-34)
4. Genre and Language (35-57)
5. Eight Interpretation Fallacies and Bible Difficulties (57-65)
6. Inerrancy Debate and Case Studies (78-91)

*\*Reading to Grow by Bernard James Mauser*

# How to Interpret the Bible



**William Tyndale (c. 1494 – c. 6 October 1536) The first man to translate the New Testament in English directly from the Greek texts. He was martyred by the Roman Church for it.**

Master Tyndale happened to be in the company of a certain divine, recounted for a learned man, and, in communing and disputing with him, he drove him to that issue, that the said great doctor burst out into these blasphemous words, “We were better to be without God’s laws than the pope’s.” Master Tyndale, hearing this, full of godly zeal, and not bearing that blasphemous saying, replied, “I defy the pope, and all his laws;” and added, “If God spare my life, I will make a boy that driveth the plough know more of the Scripture than thou dost.” **from John Foxe’s Book of Martyrs**

# How to Interpret the Bible



**Dr. Jeffrey Breshears,**  
historian and founder  
of the Areopagus  
Christian Study  
Center

Many years ago I read Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart's book, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth*. Afterward I told my wife in all seriousness that I would never want to be part of any Bible study group that didn't first take a few weeks to read and discuss this book. I was convinced that if people were not committed enough to take the necessary time to process and understand the basic principles of biblical hermeneutics (i.e., the basic principles of biblical interpretation) then any attempt at a serious and substantive Bible study would probably be an exercise in futility.

Furthermore, I was convinced that if people would take the time to read and process this book, it would probably eliminate most of the theological and hermeneutical problems that cause friction among Christians.

*An Introduction to Bibliology (page 1)*

# How to Interpret the Bible

The main things to know about God, salvation, and how to live are so accessible that a child can understand them.

The Bible is also so rich that the greatest scholar can spend his life plumbing the depths.

# How to Interpret the Bible

*Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2Tim 2:15)*

**Skill in the word requires hard work. It is in the hard work of digging into the word that spiritual growth occurs.**

# How to Interpret the Bible

*For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. (Heb 5:13-6:2)*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Introduction

The text of the Bible communicates objective truth that can be understood. Some parts are difficult to understand, but not impossible. Continued growth in understanding comes through praise, prayer, humility, study, and obedience.

Also, since God used human writers to pen his word in human language to communicate to human beings, valid principles of human language interpretation and application should always be observed.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Order of Disciplines



Hermeneutics:

How do we understand what is communicated?

Linguistics:

How do we communicate what we know?

Epistemology:

How do we know that which is?

Metaphysics:

What is that which is?

Reality:

That which is.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Key definitions

1. **Hermeneutics**--The rules of interpreting what is communicated (the art and science of interpretation)
2. **Exegesis**--Extracting from the text the meaning that the author intended for his envisaged readers. Conversely, *eisegesis* is reading into the text what isn't there (reading your own meaning into the text rather than the original author's).
3. **Biblical theology**—the careful exegesis of a biblical book or corpus (Pauline, synoptic, John, etc) to understand what God is saying through that book or corpus at that time in history with that particular vocabulary

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Key definitions

4. **Systematic theology**—the careful arrangement of truths in a self-consistent whole, relating each text of the Bible with all other texts of the Bible\*
5. **Biblical Criticism**—The critical study of the Bible (textual, source, form, redaction, literary, sociological). Textual criticism seeks to discover the text the author likely wrote. However, the other forms of criticism which can be helpful in interpretation are often loaded with unjustified skeptical (closed-system, anti-miracle) presuppositions that undermine biblical authority.

\*Systematic theology, more broadly speaking, harmonizes natural theology (from God's general revelation, i.e., nature) with biblical theology (from God's special revelation, i.e., the Bible)

# How to Interpret the Bible

Careful exegesis should always precede comparison, harmonization, and application

i.e., *Biblical* theology should always precede *systematic* theology

# How to Interpret the Bible

**Failure to do good biblical theology first can cause you to blur over important distinctions and distort your doctrinal understanding of a text with a pre-decided system or confession**

# How to Interpret the Bible

**Failure to do good systematic theology can leave you with a disarranged and/or incoherent understanding of the doctrines of the Christian faith\***

**\*The “analogy of faith” principle states that since all scriptures are harmoniously united with no contradictions, every proposed interpretation of any passage must be compared with what other parts of the Bible teach**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Basic Practical steps for the Christian

1. Prayerfully read and reread in context
2. Make observations. Ask questions (who, what, when, where, how, and why).
3. Study to form your own ideas on the original meaning first and then the implications/applications for today. Pray to grasp the value and significance of the text.
4. Compare your ideas with other believer's ideas and the best scholars (for and against your view), using sound reason with the Bible as your final authority (being humble and teachable, following the evidence wherever it leads)
5. Repeat the process

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The main tools in Bible interpretation

1. English Bible translations--Have a few for comparison but one for memorization (KJV, NKJV, RSV, ASV, NASB, NIV, ESV)
2. Bible dictionaries--For word meanings and cross references. English suffices if matched with your translation but original languages preferred. (Freedman, *Eerdmans's Dictionary of the Bible*; Bock and Merrill, *The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study*; Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*; Mounce, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*)
3. Concordance--For every usage of a word and its context (English: Strong's exhaustive for KJV, Zondervan for NASB, etc; Original Languages: Kohlenberger and Swanson, *Hebrew-English OT, Greek-English NT*)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## For deeper study in Bible interpretation

4. Commentaries--To read and compare scholars' interpretation of texts. Devotional/practical (Matthew Henry; Albert Barnes); Technical (R. K. Harrison, F.F. Bruce, D.J. Watts, D.A. Hagner)
5. Systematic Theologies--To read and compare scholars' topical conclusions and methods of various texts (Norm Geisler, Millard Erickson, Charles Ryrie)
6. White papers, books, debates and lectures on Bible topics--To read and compare scholars with specialties in different fields of study
7. Original language Bibles and Interlinear translations—To study the words and text in the original languages (TR, Majority Text, NA28 or UBS5).

# How to Interpret the Bible

## For deeper study in Bible interpretation

8. Books on Bible interpretation--To help you better interpret scripture and analyze conflicting views (Bernard Mauser, Thomas Howe on objectivity, Roy Zuck, Louis Berkhoff, Klein/Blomberg/Hubbard)
9. Original Language Bibles with critical apparatus--For textual criticism and other technical matters
10. Books on Bible History and Cultures
11. Original language grammars and helps--To gain a better understanding of the original languages

# How to Interpret the Bible

**A few apps that combine these tools electronically**

- **Logos Bible Software (expensive)**
- **Accordance Bible Software (moderately priced)**
- **Olive Tree Bible Software (very affordable)**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Some practical guidelines

- Challenge yourself to grow in grace and knowledge (never allow spiritual stagnation)
- Proceed at your pace, as you are comfortable
- Obey what you know
- Fellowship with other believers who are hungry to grow
- Learn from *many* good teachers and learn to critique them (know their strengths and weaknesses)
- Always maintain the Bible as your final authority

# ***History of Bible Interpretation***

## **1) Jewish Interpretation**

- a) Levites interpreted in late 6<sup>th</sup> century BC (Neh 8:7-8)**
- b) Jews honed hermeneutics in the late inter-testamental period**
  - i) Hellenistic Judaism in Alexandria, Egypt mixed Platonism and thus allegorically interpreted Scripture (Philo 20 B.C.- A.D. 54)**
  - ii) Qumran community sought to contemporize scriptures to fit events of their times**
  - iii) Rabbinic Judaism focused on obedience to the Torah and the rabbinic traditions. Used literal interpretation—sometimes wooden literal—and the practice of *midrash* which sought deeper meanings from the text. Used cross references and analogous words and phrases, but also fragmented scripture, applying portions independent of context**

**Source: *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr.**

# ***History of Bible Interpretation***

## **1) The Apostolic Period (ca. A.D. 30-100)**

- a) Apostles fundamentally used a literal hermeneutic with an emphasis on Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament Messianic prophecies**
- b) Apostles used typological method of interpretation—seeing the events, objects, and ideas in the Old Testament as being patterns, symbols, and shadows fulfilled in substance in the New Testament (e.g., Matthew and Hebrews)**
- c) Apostles used principle/application method, applying an Old Testament passage's underlying principle to a situation different from but comparable to the original context (e.g., Hosea 2:23; 1Cor 9:9 with 1Tim 5:17-18)**

**Source: *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr.**

# ***History of Bible Interpretation***

## **1) The Patristic Period (ca. A.D. 100-590)**

### **a) The Apostolic Fathers (ca. A.D. 100-150)**

**i) They occasionally used typology**

**ii) They used allegorical approach most often for Old Testament**

**iii) They occasionally used *midrashic* interpretive method similar to rabbis and the Qumran secretaries**

**iv) The traditional method emerged (correct interpretation is that which the churches had already taught)**

**Source: *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr.**

# ***History of Bible Interpretation***

- a) The Alexandrian School (ca. A.D. 150-400)
  - i) Tended to interpret all Old Testament scripture in light of one key theological idea (the person of Christ)
  - ii) Used allegorical method like Alexandrian Jewish scholar Philo
  - iii) Clement of Alexandria taught two-fold interpretation (literal and spiritual)
  - iv) Origen used three-fold interpretation (adding “moral” category)

**Source: *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr.**

# ***History of Bible Interpretation***

## **a) Church Councils (ca. A.D. 400-590)**

**i) Politics begin to exercise authority over the Church's interpretation**

**ii) Emperor pressured Church to settle its difference**

**iii) Augustine formed a comprehensive hermeneutics**

**(1) Focus on literal meaning**

**(2) When literal doesn't make sense interpret figuratively or allegorically**

**(a) Consult clearer passages**

**(b) Consult Church tradition**

**(c) Consult context**

**Source: *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr.**

# ***History of Bible Interpretation***

- 1) The Middle Ages (ca. A.D. 590-1500)
  - a) Depended heavily on traditional method
  - b) Allegorical method dominated (many believed a text had four meanings)
    - i) Literal (Jerusalem = ancient Jewish City)
    - ii) Allegorical (Jerusalem = the Christian Church)
    - iii) Moral (Jerusalem = the faithful soul)
    - iv) Analogical (Jerusalem = the heavenly city)
  - c) Used historical interpretation (consulting Jewish authorities)
  - d) Scholasticism (sorted out relationship between faith and reason) influenced a literal approach
  - e) Thomas Aquinas propounded literal approach as the basis on which the other senses (allegorical, analogical, etc.) rested and contained everything necessary to faith

**Source: *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr.**

# ***History of Bible Interpretation***

- 1) The Reformation (ca. A.D. 1500-1650)
  - a) New emphasis on original languages
    - i) In A.D. 1516 Erasmus published the first modern edition of the Greek New Testament
    - ii) Exposed errors in the Latin Vulgate
  - b) A growing dissatisfaction of the allegorical method (At end of 15<sup>th</sup> century, Geiler Kaiserberg said allegorical method had made Scripture a “nose of wax”). Many rued the arbitrary, speculative nature of allegory.
  - c) Martin Luther broke with church tradition and allegory and adopted a literal and typological approach
  - d) John Calvin rejected allegory in favor of historical interpretation
  - e) Anabaptists and Mennonites rejected church tradition and allegory and emphasized the priority of the New Testament and the perspicuity of Scripture. As a community, Christians could together understand and apply Scripture toward correct theology and personal piety
  - f) Roman Catholic counter-reformation emphasized Scripture *and* tradition as authoritative. Correct interpretation was established by the popes and church councils and the Vulgate was affirmed as the authentic Bible.

# ***History of Bible Interpretation***

## **1) The Modern Period (ca. A.D. 1800-Present)**

### **a) The Nineteenth Century**

- i) Unprecedented expansion in missions and repudiation of Christianity among intellectuals**
- ii) Advances in science and an evolution paradigm birthed the *historical-critical method*, led by German rationalists (F.C. Baur, Julius Wellhausen, Adolf von Harnack)**
  - (1) Emphasized human reason, free of theological limitations**
  - (2) Presupposed naturalistic worldview (no miracles), Bible authors were primitive compared to modern interpreters, and Bible truths were time-bound versus timeless**
- iii) Liberals critiqued effectively by J.B. Lightfoot, B.B. Warfield, W.H. Green, W.J. Beecher**
- iv) Restoration Movement of B.W. Stone and Alexander Campbell developed hermeneutical approach similar to future evangelicals**

# ***History of Bible Interpretation***

## **a) The Twentieth Century**

- i) *History of Religions* approach (tracing history of ancient Near-Eastern religions, showed how ancient neighboring religions profoundly influenced the practice of the Israelites)**
- ii) *Form Criticism* focused on literary types and the hermeneutical methods appropriate for the types**
- iii) Karl Barth (1886-1968) critiqued liberalism and emphasized Scripture as the Word of God and the necessity of a personal encounter with God, but rejected biblical inerrancy**
- iv) Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), the father of *Neo-Orthodoxy*, used *form criticism* to question the historical reliability of the Gospels. Bultmann distinguished the “Jesus of history” (who actually lived) from the Jesus of the Christian faith. Sought to demythologize the Bible, rejecting “pre-scientific miracle claims.” The Bible becomes the word of God in a subjective personal encounter with it. Believed truth was paradoxical in nature, accepting apparently conflicting statements in Scripture.**
- v) *Biblical Theology Movement* revived the theological dimension of the Bible as opposed to the historical critical matters that formerly dominated commentaries**
- vi) *The New Hermeneutic* (from Bultmann’s theological children) deemphasized the text’s historical meaning and focused on insights into human existence**

# ***History of Bible Interpretation***

## **1) Recent Literary Criticism and Social-Scientific Approaches (as opposed to the traditional historical-grammatical analysis)**

### **a) Literary Criticism**

#### **i) Narrative Criticism**

- (1) Focuses on a plot, themes, characterizations and other features of the “surface structure” of biblical books as literature**
- (2) Often assume the texts must be viewed as fiction**
- (3) Often depreciate the religious value of a text in favor of its aesthetics**

#### **ii) Poststructuralism**

- (1) Ideologically linked to post-modernism, considers the meaning residing in individual readers**
- (2) Reader-response Criticism—Focuses on the diverse ways readers respond to a text versus the author’s intention**
- (3) Deconstructionism—All texts, even all communication, ultimately “deconstructs” or undermines itself. Seeks subtle inconsistencies or ambiguities in a text that seem hard to resolve to claim the text has no fixed meaning**

# ***History of Bible Interpretation***

## **a) Social-Scientific Approaches**

- i) Two categories: Research that illuminates the social history of the biblical world and the application of modern theories of human behavior to scriptural texts**
- ii) Liberation hermeneutics—experience takes precedence over theory. Focuses on the financially poor, seeks imposing social justice through economic and political reform versus voluntary giving. Often deemphasizes spiritual salvation**

## **iii) Feminist hermeneutics**

- (1) Evangelical feminism believes scripture teaches full equality of the sexes and does not delineate any unique timeless roles for husband versus wife or male versus female**
- (2) Non-evangelical feminism agrees with more traditional Christians that parts of the Bible promote patriarchy and bar women from certain roles within the family and church**

## **iv) Homosexual hermeneutics**

- (1) Evangelical homosexual hermeneutics teaches that scripture does not forbid homosexuality per se.**
- (2) Anti-Christian homosexual hermeneutics agree with more traditional Christians that the Bible condemns homosexuality**

# The Bible as God's Word

1. Truth corresponds to reality and is objective, universal and knowable.
2. There are many good reasons from nature to believe that God exists.
3. If God exists, miracles are possible.
4. The New Testament documents are historically reliable.
5. The best explanation of the historically-established facts regarding Jesus of Nazareth is that he miraculously rose from the dead as he promised, verifying that he was the unique Son of God from heaven as he claimed to be.
6. If Jesus is the Son of God from heaven, his high view of scripture as the Word of God is correct and should be accepted. Other corroborating facts support this conclusion: the Bible's unity, historical accuracy, honesty about the human moral condition, fulfilled predictive prophecies, and life transforming power as testified by millions of people, to name a few.

# The Bible as God's Word

## Inspiration

All scripture is given by inspiration (2Timothy 3:16)

“Given by inspiration”, θεόπνευστος, means God-breathed . Only scripture is God-breathed and thus only scripture can claim to be the authoritative words of God.

While the speakers were moved by the Holy Spirit to speak, inspiration refers to the *words* of scripture not their authors. Nor does it refer to the physical documents upon which the words were written.

# **The Bible as God's Word**

**Inerrancy (truthful in all it affirms) flows from inspiration**

**All scripture is given by inspiration of God  
God does not inspire error  
Therefore the scriptures are inerrant**

**God cannot err  
The Bible is God's word  
Therefore the Bible cannot err**

**Other pieces of literature can be inerrant, but  
scripture is necessarily inerrant by virtue of the fact  
that all scripture is inspired by God**

# The Bible as God's Word



Defending Inerrancy

**Home**

What's the Big Deal?

The Bible Petition

The Statements

Menu ▾



**STANDING UP FOR THE BIBLE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE**

Sign The Petition

<http://defendinginerrancy.com/>

# The Bible as God's Word

## Impact of full inerrancy on interpretation

If the Bible is without error, not only will it be in agreement with external scientific and historical facts, it will also be internally coherent (i.e., there will be no internal contradictions).

This consideration will affect your biblical theology as well as your systematic theology

# The Bible as God's Word

## Approaches of reconciling full inerrancy with “apparent contradictions”

1. Abstract approach of B.B. Warfield. Difficulties need not be explained due to the weight of evidence for inerrancy
2. Harmonistic approach of Edward J. Young and Louis Gaussen. Difficulties can be harmonized with existing data we have.
3. Moderate harmonization approach of Everett Harrison. Serious approach to harmonize as many as possible with available data--with others remaining unresolved until more data is obtained
4. Reproduction approach suggested by Edward Carnell. The Bible writers reproduce erroneous information from other sources

# The Bible as God's Word

## Impact of inerrancy on interpretation of apparent contradictions

Some Christians, like Dewey Beegle, feel like the apparent contradictions are insoluble and are thus real contradictions. Hence, the view is that we should acknowledge that they are errors and construct our doctrine of inspiration around them.

Of the Christians who say the internal problems are insoluble, some admit the Bible contains errors (like Dewey) and may uphold “infallibility” instead of “inerrancy”, while others want to claim “inerrancy” while redefining it away from “propositional truth” or “correspondence theory of truth”

# The Bible as God's Word

## My approach of reconciling full inerrancy with “apparent contradictions”

1. Abstract approach of B.B. Warfield. Difficulties need not be explained due to the weight of evidence for inerrancy
2. Harmonistic approach of Edward Strong and Louis Gaussen. Difficulties can be harmonized with existing data we have.
-  3. **Moderate harmonization approach of Everett Harrison. Serious approach to harmonize as many as possible with available data--with others remaining unresolved until more data is obtained**
4. Reproduction approach suggested by Edward Carnell. The Bible writers reproduce erroneous information from other sources

# How to Interpret the Bible

Travis Echols

## Lesson 2. Textual Criticism and Bible Translations



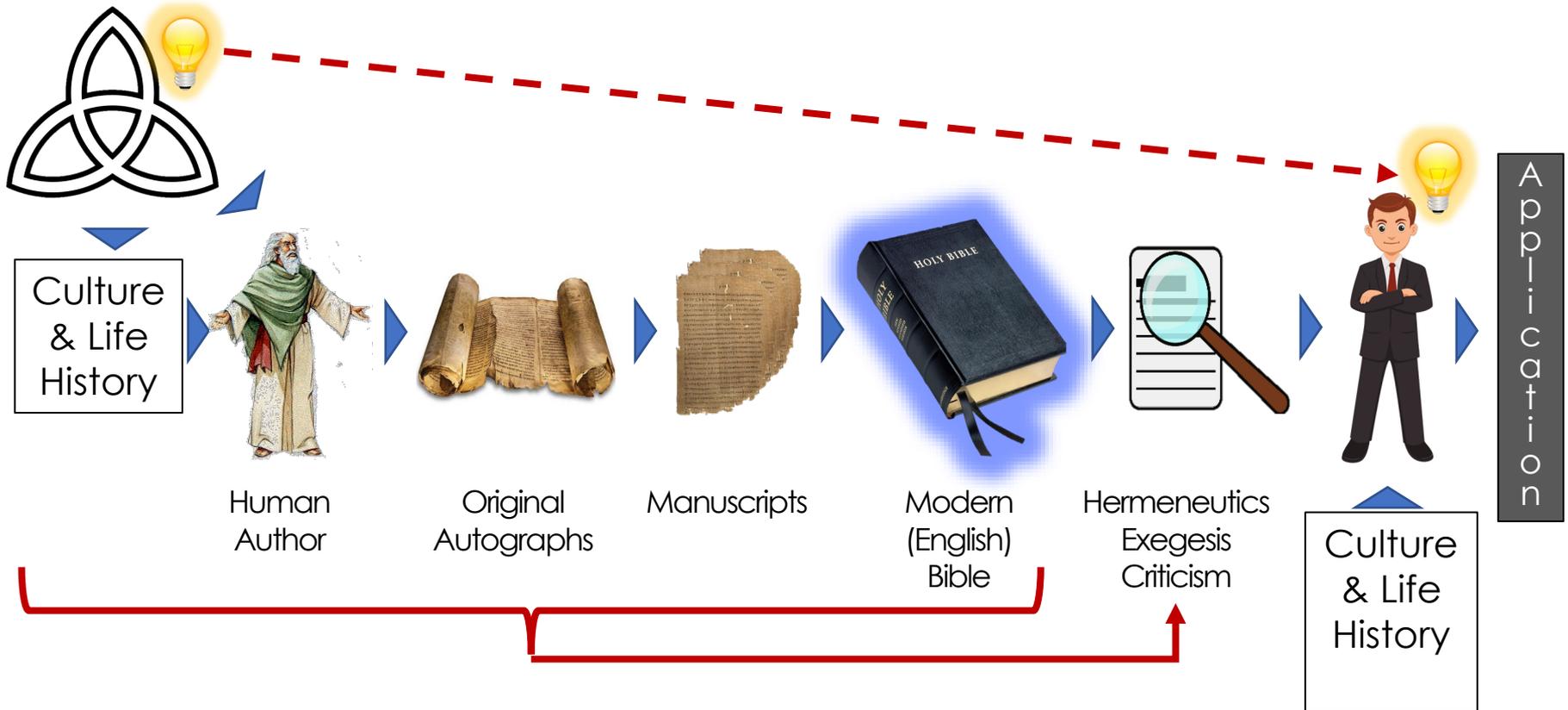
# How to Interpret the Bible

## Six-week course outline

1. Introduction, History of Interpretation, and the Bible as God's Word (pages 1-12)\*
-  2. Textual Criticism and Bible Translations (13-28)
3. Five Principles of Interpretation (29-34)
4. Genre and Language (35-57)
5. Eight Interpretation Fallacies and Bible Difficulties (57-65)
6. Inerrancy Debate and Case Studies (78-91)

*\*Reading to Grow* by Bernard James Mauser

# We Must Understand HOW our Bible was Produced in Order to Understand It



# **Bible Verses on the Preservation of Scripture**

**Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of  
old that You have founded them forever. (Ps  
119:152)**

**The entirety of Your word is truth,  
And every one of Your righteous judgments  
endures forever (Ps 119:160).**

**The grass withers, the flower fades,  
But the word of our God stands forever. (Isa  
40:8)**

# **Bible Verses on the Preservation of Scripture**

**But He answered and said, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”  
(Mt 4:4)**

**For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. (Mt 5:18).**

**Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. (Mt 24:35)**

# **Bible Verses on the Preservation of Scripture**

**If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),...(Jn 10:35)**

**Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it... (Rev 1:3).**

# Bible Verses on the Preservation of Scripture

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Rev 22:18-19)

# Bible Verses on the Preservation of Scripture

...and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2Tim 3:15-17).

# Bible Verses on the Preservation of Scripture

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ...” (Mt 21:42)

Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.” (Mt 22:29)

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life;...” (Jn 5:39)

# Bible Verses on the Preservation of Scripture

And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this: He was led as a sheep...Acts 8:32

Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,..(Acts 17:2)

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11)

# The Bible as God's Word

1. God has spoken through his Son Jesus, the Word made flesh (Jn 1:1, 14; Heb 1:1).
2. Jesus spoke to mankind through all he did and said.
3. An important aspect of Jesus' earthly ministry was his teaching and preaching. He did not speak in a heavenly language, but the earthly languages of mankind.

# The Bible as God's Word

4. Jesus referred to the Old Testament documents of his day as scripture (γραφή) from God. (Mat 4:4-7; 5:17-18; 21:42; 19:4-5; 22:29; 26:54-56; Mark 12:10; 14:49; Luke 4:21; 24:25-27,32,45; John 5:39; 7:38; 13:18; 17:12, 17; 19:28).

He also viewed his own words to be God's words (John 6:63; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10; Matt 5:22,28,32,34; Luke 21:33). Jesus endorsed the New Testament scriptures by promising to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth and bring to their remembrance all things he had said to them (John 14:26; 16:13). See [Why Believe the Bible](#).

# The Bible as God's Word

5. The two major languages of scripture, Hebrew (Old Testament) and koine Greek (New Testament), were the human languages of the time and geography in which the scriptures were given.

These ordinary words of human languages providentially, faithfully, and truthfully convey God's revelatory message; hence they are the words of God (Psalm 119:160; Prov 4:4-5; 30:6; Matt 24:35; Jn 6:63; 14:23; 1Thes 2:13; Rev 22:18-19).

God has always known and purposed that human language (with all its strengths and weaknesses as a form of communication) would be his means of communicating to mankind.

# The Bible as God's Word

6. God gives Christians “speaking gifts” to communicate his truth through human language (Acts 2; 1Cor 12).

For example:

- prophesying (προφητεία),
- word of knowledge (λόγος γνῶσις),
- speaking in different languages (γέννη γλωσσῶν), and
- interpreting languages (ἐρμηνεία γλωσσῶν)

See [Speaking with Tongues](#)

# The Bible as God's Word

7. God has expressed his desire for people to understand him in their own language. If we speak to people in a language that they do not know (i.e., an unknown tongue), they will not understand what we say and therefore they will not be edified.

To fulfill the great commission, God uses people to speak and translate his words into different languages so other people can understand God's words in their own tongue (Acts 2; 1Cor 12-14).

# The Bible as God's Word

8. **Scripture self-attests to the importance of its “words” because words convey meaning. Generally, to change the words of a text is to change the meaning. However, because of God’s reversal of Babel in Acts 2 and his empowering of the speaking gifts to communicate the gospel worldwide, it can be concluded that words in different languages than the original languages can be the words of God also--inasmuch as they have the same meaning as the original words. Therefore, the goal of translating is to convey the meaning from the original languages to the different human languages of the world.**

# The Bible as God's Word

9. The scriptures did not come into existence through the private interpretation of the human author. Rather, the Holy Spirit moved holy men to speak words which were then written down by either themselves or a secretary.

These canonical writings are referred to as scripture and as the word of God (2Peter 1:21 with 3:15-16 and Rom 16:22; 1Cor 2:12-13; 14:37; 1Thes 2:13). The scriptures are a surer word from God than hearing God's voice (2Pet 1:19). 2Peter 1:17-21 affirms that the scriptures originated with the autographs (i.e., the original manuscripts dispatched by the holy men).

# The Bible as God's Word

10. All scripture is θεόπνευστος (God-breathed, translated “given by inspiration of God”) and is essential to the believer’s relationship with God and to his fellow man (2Tim 3:16,17). The scriptures are a vital and integral means by which God accomplishes his purposes in the world. See The Scriptures.

It is important not to get lost in the mechanics of inspiration and forget that it is the product (i.e., the written words) that are God-breathed.

# The Bible as God's Word

11. The term “scripture” (γραφῆ) cannot be confined to the autographs. Jesus and the apostles referred to the apographs (copies) and/or translations to which they had access as “scripture” (2Tim 3:15-16; Matt 21:42; 22:29; Jn 5:39; Acts 17:2, 11; 8:32).

**Note:** The words of scripture had endured via the copies and/or translations well beyond the perishable material upon which the Old Testament words were written. The *words of scripture* should never be conflated with the physical paper and ink used to record those words.

# The Bible as God's Word

**12. A review of the historical data and manuscript evidence indicates that God's means of preserving scripture was**

- **meticulous copying (as with the Old Testament Hebrew scriptures),**
- **extensive copying (as with the New Testament Greek scriptures), and**
- **usage in the church through preaching, teaching, and translating the scriptures.**

# **The Bible as God's Word**

**What about the textual differences  
in the copies?**

# New Testament Manuscripts

www.csntm.org/manuscript

csntm - Yahoo Search Results

Manuscripts - CSNTM

Yahoo



THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS



- Home
- Manuscripts
- Printed Books
- About the Center
- News & Notes
- Resources
- Donations
- Contact

Google Custom Search

Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts  
(CSNTM)

# New Testament Manuscripts

Gregory  
-Aland  
Number

Type

Date

Description

Location

Shelf  
Number

Link

GA 0303	Majuscule	8th Century	Eighth century manuscript of Luke on parchment; 1 leaf, 2 columns, 23 lines per column. For recent images, please visit the <a href="#">Bibliothèque Nationale</a>	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale	Suppl. Gr. 1155 VII, fol. 19	<a href="#">View</a>
GA 0308	Majuscule	4th Century	Revelation majuscule manuscript on parchment; 1 fragment, single column, approximately 14 lines per column. By agreement with the custodian of the manuscript, the images are not posted online; they are available for viewing at the CSNTM offices.	Oxford, Ashmolean Museum	P. Oxy. 4500	<a href="#">View</a>
GA 0309	Majuscule	6th Century	Gospels majuscule manuscript on parchment; 1 fragment, single column, approximately 27 lines per column. By agreement with the custodian of the manuscript, the images are not posted online; they are available for viewing at the CSNTM offices.	Cologne, Institut für Altertumskunde	Inv. 806	<a href="#">View</a>
GA 0311	Majuscule	8th–9th Century	Majuscule manuscript of Paul on parchment; single leaf in eight fragments, 2 columns, approximately 23 lines per column.	Cambridge, de Hamel Coll.	de Hamel MS 390	<a href="#">View</a>
GA 0312	Majuscule	3rd–4th Century	Gospels majuscule manuscript on parchment; 1 fragment, 2 columns, approximately 27 lines per column.	Cambridge, de Hamel Coll.	de Hamel MS 386	<a href="#">View</a>
GA 0313	Majuscule	5th Century	Gospels majuscule manuscript on parchment; 1 fragment, single column, 2 lines visible.	Cambridge, de Hamel Coll.	de Hamel MS 388	<a href="#">View</a>
GA 0314	Majuscule	6th Century	Gospels majuscule manuscript on parchment; 1 fragment, single column, 2 lines visible.	Cambridge, de Hamel Coll.	de Hamel MS 389	<a href="#">View</a>
GA 0315	Majuscule	4th–5th Century	Gospels majuscule manuscript on parchment; 1 fragment, 2 columns, approximately 32 lines per column.	Cambridge, de Hamel Coll.	de Hamel MS 387	<a href="#">View</a>

# ***New Testament Manuscripts***

We do not have the autographs, but a vast collection of manuscript copies, lectionaries, patristic quotes, and translations.

Liberal New Testament textual critics believe the New Testament original text cannot be reconstructed.

Conservative textual critics believe it generally can, estimating that only around 1400 words (1%) remain in doubt out of the approximately 140,000 words in the Greek New Testament.

# ***New Testament Manuscripts***

- **Due to the abundance of manuscripts, there are many variant readings in the manuscripts (estimated 200,000 to 400,000 variants in the 2.5 million pages of the almost 6000 extant Greek manuscripts—conservatively 1 variant per 6.25 pages).**

# ***New Testament Manuscripts***

- It was difficult for New Testament scribes to hand copy each document. They did not have eye glasses and some koiné Greek manuscripts do not have spaces between words. Also, even simple Greek sentences can be spelled many different ways.
- Short of a miraculous supervision of every scribe who copied over 1500 years, these types and number of variants are normal, if not less severe and numerous than would be expected.

# ***New Testament Manuscripts***

- **The vast majority of variants are insignificant spelling, word order, and synonym differences that do not affect the fundamental meaning of the text. Only a very small percentage of the viable variants (estimated at 0.25% of the text) are significant to the meaning or implications of the text.**

# ***New Testament Manuscripts***

- These textual differences have varying degrees of significance. For example, compare different Bible versions (particularly the Textus Receptus/Majority Text/KJV/NKJV versus the Critical Nestlé-Aland Text/NIV/ NASB/ESV) at Matt 1:25; 19:9b; Mark 1:2-3; 41; 16:9-20; [Matt 17:21; Mk 9:29]; Luke 2:33; 23:42; Jn 1:18; 4:1; 7:53-8:11; 14:14; Acts 8:37; Rom 8:1b; 14:10; Col 1:14; 1Thes 2:7; 1Tim 3:16; Heb 3:16; 1Jn 5:7.

See [Bible Differences](#)

# ***New Testament Manuscripts***

- **While differences exist in the particulars in a relatively small number of places, which may strengthen or weaken the case for certain doctrines, none of these differences in the Greek manuscripts, Greek printed texts, or mainstream English Bibles [KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, ESV, etc.] jeopardize any essential doctrine of the Christian faith. Sources used: Daniel Wallace, Peter J. Williams**

# New Testament Manuscripts

## Textual Differences

Matt 17:21

<p>KJV with Strong's</p> <p>remove hence to youaei place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. <sup>21</sup> Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.</p>	<p>GNT-TRS</p> <p>ἐκεῖ, καὶ μεταβήσεται· καὶ οὐδὲν ἀδυνατήσει ὑμῖν. <sup>21</sup> τοῦτο δὲ τὸ γένος οὐκ ἐκπορεύεται εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ νηστείᾳ.</p> <p>Matt. 17:22 Ἐναστρεφομένων δὲ</p>	<p>NIV11-GK</p> <p>and it will move.<sup>c</sup> Nothing will be impossible for you."<sup>a</sup></p> <p>---</p> <p>Matt. 17:22 When they came together in Galilee, he said to</p>	<p>NA28 Greek NT</p> <p>ἐκεῖ, καὶ μεταβήσεται· καὶ οὐδὲν ἀδυνατήσει ὑμῖν.</p> <p>---</p> <p>Matt. 17:22 Συστρεφομένων δὲ αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ εἶπεν</p>
<p>NKJV Not</p> <p><b>Matthew 17:20</b> <a href="#">NU-Text</a> reads <i>little faith</i>.</p> <p><b>Matthew 17:21</b> <a href="#">NU-Text</a> omits this verse.</p>	<p>NET Notes</p> <p>38 <b>tn</b> Here καί (kai) has not been translated.</p> <p>39 <b>tc</b> Many important MSS (<b>N</b>* <b>B</b> <b>Θ</b> 0281 33 579 892* <i>pc e ff<sup>1</sup> sy<sup>s</sup>, c sa</i>) do not include 17:21 "But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." The verse is included in <b>X</b><sup>2</sup> <b>C</b> <b>D</b> <b>L</b> <b>W</b> <i>f</i><sup>1</sup>, <sup>13</sup> <i>it</i> <b>lat</b>, but is almost certainly not original. As B. M. Metzger notes, "Since there is no satisfactory reason why the passage, if originally present in Matthew, should have been</p>		

The Byzantine/Textus Receptus/Majority/KJV/NKJV text has Jesus commending prayer and fasting.

The Alexandrian/Nestle-Aland/UBS/NAS/NIV text does not have this verse.

# New Testament Manuscripts

## Textual Differences

Mk 9:29

<p>A A [font] [size] [bold] [italic] [underline] [link] KJV with Strong's ▾</p> <p>out? <b>29</b> And he said unto them, <b>This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.</b></p> <p><b>Mark 9:30</b> And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that</p>	<p>A A [font] [size] [bold] [italic] [underline] [link] GNT-TRS ▾</p> <p>ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτό; <b>29</b> καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Τοῦτο τὸ γένος ἐν οὐδενὶ δύναται ἐξελθεῖν, εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ <u>νηστείᾳ</u>.</p> <p><b>Mark 9:30</b> Καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἐξελθόντες παρεπορεύοντο διὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας; καὶ οὐκ ᾔθελεν ἵνα</p>	<p>A A [font] [size] [bold] [italic] [underline] [link] NIV11-GK ▾</p> <p><b>Mark 9:29</b> He replied, <b>"This kind can come out only by prayer.<sup>a</sup>"</b></p> <p><b>Mark 9:30</b> They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, <sup>31</sup></p>	<p>A A [font] [size] [bold] [italic] [underline] [link] NA28 Greek NT ▾</p> <p>ἠδυνήθημεν ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτό; <b>29</b> καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τοῦτο τὸ γένος ἐν οὐδενὶ δύναται ἐξελθεῖν εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ.</p> <p><b>Mark 9:30</b> Καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἐξελθόντες παρεπορεύοντο διὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ οὐκ ᾔθελεν</p>
<p>A A [font] [size] [bold] [italic] [underline] [link] NKJV Notes ▾</p> <p><b>Mark 9:29</b> <a href="#">NU-Text</a> omits <i>and fasting</i>.</p> <p><b>Mark 9:40</b> <a href="#">M-Text</a> reads <i>against you is on your side</i>.</p> <p><b>Mark 9:44</b></p>	<p>A A [font] [size] [bold] [italic] [underline] [link] NET Notes ▾</p> <p><b>Mark 9:29</b> <sup>38</sup> <u>tc</u> Most witnesses, even early and excellent ones (p<sup>45vid</sup> <b>N<sup>2</sup> A C D L W Θ Ψ f<sup>1</sup> 13 33 m lat co</b>), have "and fasting" (καὶ νηστεία, kai nēsteia) after "prayer" here. But this seems to be a motivated reading, due to the early church's emphasis on fasting (TCGNT 85; cf., e.g., 2 Clem. 16:4; Pol. Phil 7:2; Did. 1:3; 7:4). That the most important witnesses (<b>N* B</b>), as well as a few others (0274 2427 k), lack καὶ νηστεία, when a good reason for the omission is difficult to find, argues strongly for the shorter reading.</p>		

The Byzantine/Textus Receptus/Majority/KJV/NKJV text has Jesus saying "and fasting". The Alexandrian/Nestle-Aland/UBS/NAS/NIV text does not have these words.

# New Testament Manuscripts

## Textual Differences

### Jn 14:14

the Son. <sup>14</sup> If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

**John 14:15** If ye love me, keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will pray the Father, and he

υἱῷ. <sup>14</sup> εἴάν τι αἰτήσητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ἐγὼ ποιήσω. <sup>15</sup> εἴάν ἀγαπάτέ με, τὰς ἐντολάς τὰς ἐμὰς τηρήσετε. <sup>16</sup> καὶ ἐγὼ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ἄλλον παράκλητον δώσει

be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> You may ask **me** for anything in my name, and I will do it.

**John 14:15** "If you love me, keep my commands" <sup>16</sup> And I

<sup>14</sup> εἴάν τι αἰτήσητε **με** ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου ἐγὼ ποιήσω.

**John 14:15** Ἐὰν ἀγαπάτέ με, τὰς ἐντολάς τὰς ἐμὰς τηρήσετε. <sup>16</sup> κἀγὼ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα

**John 14:14**  
[NU-Text](#) adds *Me*.

**John 14:15**  
[NU-Text](#) reads *you will keep*.

**John 14:13**  
<sup>32</sup> tn Grk "And whatever you ask in my name, I will do it."

**John 14:15**  
<sup>33</sup> tn Or "may be praised" or "may be honored."

The Byzantine/Textus Receptus/Majority/KJV/NKJV text does not have the word "me". The Alexandrian/ Nestle-Aland/UBS/NAS/NIV text has the word "me", having Jesus teaching the disciples to pray to Jesus in Jesus' name.

# New Testament Manuscripts

## Textual Differences

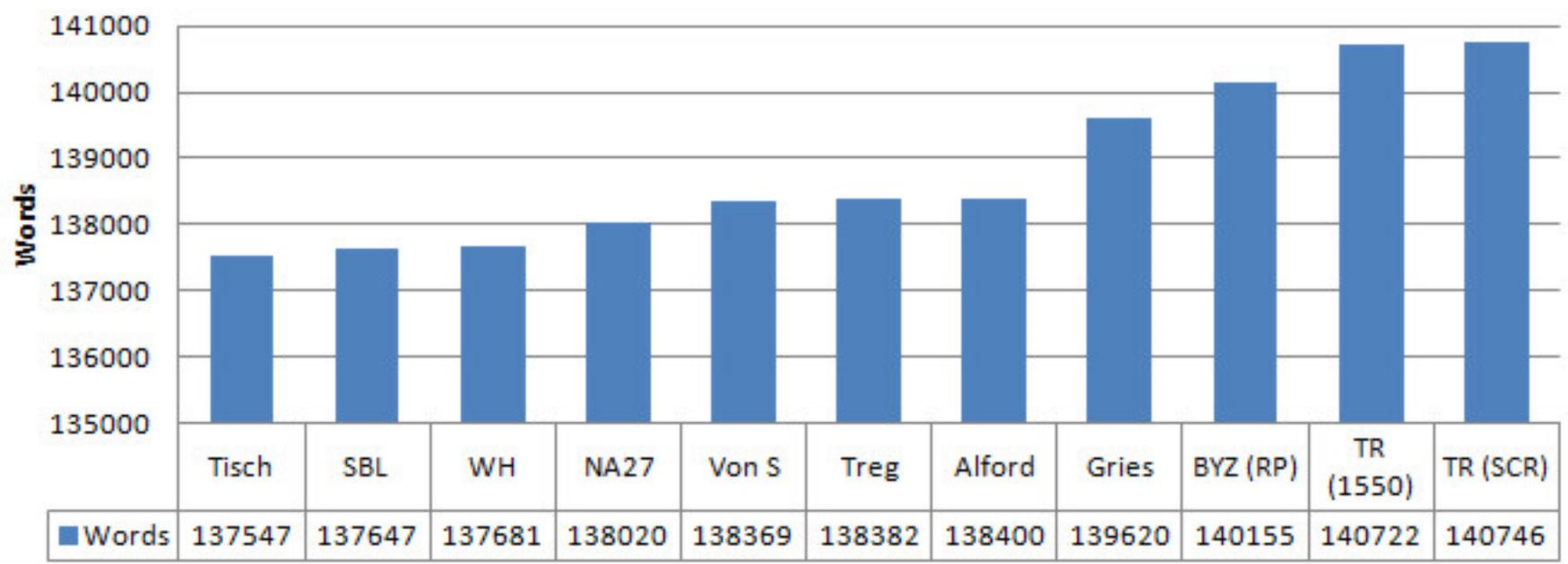
### Acts 8:37

<p>KJV with Strong's</p> <p>hinder me to be baptized?<sup>37</sup> And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.<sup>38</sup> And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and</p>	<p>GNT-TRS</p> <p>βαπτισθῆναι; <sup>37</sup> εἶπε δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος, Ἐἰ πιστεύεις ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας, ἔξοισιν. ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπε, Πιστεύω τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν. <sup>38</sup> καὶ ἐκέλευσε στήναι τὸ ἄρμα· καὶ κατέβησαν ἀμφότεροι εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ, ὃ τε Φίλιππος καὶ ὁ</p>	<p>NIV11-GK</p> <p>my being baptized?"<sup>aa</sup> --</p> <p><sup>38</sup> And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup> When they came up out of the water, the</p>	<p>NA28 Greek NT</p> <p>βαπτισθῆναι; --</p> <p><sup>38</sup> καὶ ἐκέλευσε στήναι τὸ ἄρμα καὶ κατέβησαν ἀμφότεροι εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ, ὃ τε Φίλιππος καὶ ὁ εὐνοῦχος, καὶ ἐβάπτισεν αὐτόν. <sup>39</sup> ὅτε δὲ ἀνέβησαν ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος, πρὸς τὸν κροῖον ἤρπασεν τὸν</p>
<p>NKJV Notes</p> <p><b>Acts 8:37</b> NU-Text and M-Text omit this verse. It is found in Western texts, including the Latin tradition.</p> <p><b>Acts 9:5</b> NU-Text and M-Text omit the last sentence of verse 5 and begin verse 6 with <i>But arise and go</i>.</p>	<p>NET Notes</p> <p><b>Acts 8:36</b> <sup>91</sup> tn Or "What prevents me." The rhetorical question means, "I should get baptized, right?"</p> <p><sup>92</sup> tc A few later MSS (E 36 323 453 945 1739 1891 pc) add, with minor variations, 8:37 "He said to him, 'If you believe with your whole heart, you may.' He replied, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'" Verse 37 is lacking in {p<sup>45,74</sup> s A B C 33 614 vg sy<sup>p,h</sup> co}. It is clearly not a part of the original text of Acts. The variant is significant in showing how some in the early church viewed a confession of faith. The present translation follows NA<sup>27</sup> in omitting the</p>		

The Textus Receptus/KJV text has verse 37. The Alexandrian/Nestle-Aland/UBS/NAS/NIV text as well as the Byzantine/Majority text does not have this verse.

# New Testament Manuscripts

## Greek NT Texts by Word Length



# New Testament Manuscripts

## Textual Philosophies

- Reasoned Eclecticism -- the modern method of New Testament textual criticism. Philosophy of most new Bibles translated from the Critical Text (UBS and Nestle-Aland). Prefers the shorter, harder, disharmonized, and harsher forms of text. Strong Alexandrian priority. Advocated by textual critics such as Daniel Wallace and Gordon Fee.
- Alternatives to reasoned eclecticism are
  - Dennis Kenaga, *Skeptical Trends in New Testament Textual Criticism*
  - James Royse, *The Treatment of Scribal Leaps in Metzger's Textual Commentary*
  - Reasoned Conservatism, D. A. Black, *New Testament Textual Criticism: a Concise Guide*,
  - Harry Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-type and New Testament Textual Criticism*,
  - Maurice Robinson, *Byzantine Priority*
  - Zane Hodges, *The Majority Text*
  - Geneological Theory offered by James D. Price
  - Textus Receptus traditional approach, Donald Waite, Douglas Wilson, Ed Hills, Ted Letis

# Four Views of the Preservation of Scripture

**Scripture does not Promise Preservation, but the Scriptures are Essentially Preserved**  
(Daniel Wallace, Edward Glenny)

**Scripture Promises Preservation and the Scriptures are Essentially Preserved**  
(William W. Combs)

**Scripture Promises Perfect Preservation and the Scriptures are Perfectly Preserved, but Not Necessarily in one Standard Text**  
(James D. Price)

**Scripture Promises Perfect Preservation and the Scriptures are Perfectly Preserved and can be Identified with Certainty in one Standard Text**  
(Edward F. Hills, Theodore P. Letis)

## Scriptural Position on Preservation

The Bible does not teach a doctrine of scripture preservation

The Bible teaches a doctrine of preservation but not pertaining to the exact words of scripture (Psalm 119:152, 160; Isa 40:8; Matt 5:18; 24:35; Jn 10:35)

The Bible teaches a doctrine of preservation including the words of scripture (Psalm 12:5-6; 119:152, 160; Isa 40:8; Matt 4:4; 5:18; 24:35; Jn 10:35; Rev 1:3; 22:18-19)

The Bible teaches a doctrine of preservation including the words of scripture (Psalm 12:5-6; 119:152, 160; Isa 40:8; Matt 4:4; 5:18; 24:35; Jn 10:35; Rev 1:3; 22:18-19)

**See [Four Views of the Preservation of Scriptures](#)**

# Translation Differences

Matt 5:2

Formal translation

A A [font size] [font style] [font color] KJV with Strong's

**Matt. 5:1** And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup> And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying

Functional translation

A A [font size] [font style] [font color] GNT-TRS

**Matt. 5:1** Ἴδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος· καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσήλθον αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, <sup>2</sup> καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ· ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς, λέγων,

A A [font size] [font style] [font color] NIV11-GK

**Matt. 5:1** Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, <sup>2</sup> and he began to teach them. He said:

A A [font size] [font style] [font color] NA28 Greek NT

**Matt. 5:1** Ἴδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος, καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσήλθον αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ· <sup>2</sup> καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς λέγων· <sup>3</sup> Μακάριοι οἱ

The KJV/NKJV says Jesus “opened his mouth” per the Greek text. The NIV11 says he “began to teach”, attempting to translate the *thought* rather than the Greek words.

# Translation Differences

Formal translation		Functional translation	
<p>neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. <sup>16</sup> And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.</p>	<p>χαρήσονται. <sup>15</sup> ἔσται γὰρ μέγας ἐνώπιον τοῦ Κυρίου, καὶ οἶνον καὶ σίκερα οὐ μὴ πῖη, καὶ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου πλησθήσεται ἔτι ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ. <sup>16</sup> καὶ πολλοὺς τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐπιστρέψει</p>	<p>wine or other fermented drink,<sup>a</sup> and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit<sup>b</sup> even before he is born.<sup>c</sup> <sup>16</sup> He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord</p>	<p>καὶ οἶνον καὶ σίκερα οὐ μὴ πῖη  καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου πλησθήσεται ἔτι ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ, <sup>16</sup> καὶ πολλοὺς τῶν υἱῶν</p>
<p><b>κοιλίας</b> κοιλία (κοῖλος) Noun fem sing gen stomach, womb</p>		<p><b>μητρὸς</b> μήτηρ Noun fem sing gen mother</p>	
<p>[ESVS] G2836 womb</p>		<p>[ESVS] G3384 mother's</p>	

The KJV/NKJV text says “from his mother’s womb” per the Greek text. The NIV11 says he “before he is born” attempting to translate the *thought* rather than Greek words.

# Translation Differences

Acts 4:27

A A [font] [size] [color] KJV with Strong's

his Christ. <sup>27</sup> For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. <sup>28</sup> For to

A A [font] [size] [color] GNT-TRS

κατὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ. <sup>27</sup> συνήχθησαν γὰρ ἐπ' ἀληθείας ἐπὶ τὸν ἅγιον παῖδα σου Ἰησοῦν, ὃν ἔχρισας, Ἡρώδης τε καὶ Πόντιος Πιλάτος, σὺν ἔθνεσι καὶ λαοῖς Ἰσραὴλ, <sup>28</sup> ποιῆσαι ὅσα ἡ χεὶρ σου καὶ ἡ

A A [font] [size] [color] NIV11-GK

Acts 4:27 Indeed Herod<sup>a</sup> and Pontius Pilate<sup>b</sup> met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus,<sup>c</sup> whom you anointed. <sup>28</sup> They did what

A A [font] [size] [color] NA28 Greek NT

<sup>27</sup> συνήχθησαν γὰρ ἐπ' ἀληθείας ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ ἐπὶ τὸν ἅγιον παῖδά σου Ἰησοῦν ὃν ἔχρισας, Ἡρώδης τε καὶ Πόντιος Πιλάτος σὺν ἔθνεσιν καὶ λαοῖς Ἰσραὴλ, <sup>28</sup> ποιῆσαι ὅσα ἡ χεὶρ σου καὶ

**παῖδά παῖς** Noun masc sing acc **child; slave**

[ESVS] **G3816** **servant**

The KJV/NKJV text says “child”. The NIV11 says “servant” from the same Greek word.

# Translation Differences

Rom 16:1

A A [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] KJV with Strong's [icon]

**Rom. 16:1** I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: <sup>2</sup> That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been

A A [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] GNT-TR5 [icon]

**Rom. 16:1** Συνίστημι δὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὖσαν διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς· <sup>2</sup> ἵνα αὐτὴν προσδέξησθε ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀξίως τῶν ἁγίων, καὶ παραστήτε αὐτῇ ἐν ᾧ ἂν ὑμῶν χρῆσι πρᾶγματι· καὶ γὰρ αὕτη προστάτις πολλῶν ἐκευῶν

A A [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] NIV11-GK [icon]

**Rom. 16:1** I commend<sup>a</sup> to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon<sup>a, b</sup> of the church in Cenchrea.<sup>b 2</sup> I ask you to receive her in the Lord<sup>a</sup> in a way worthy of his people<sup>b</sup> and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the

A A [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] NA28 Greek NT [icon]

**Rom. 16:1** Συνίστημι δὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὖσαν [καὶ] διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς, <sup>2</sup> ἵνα αὐτὴν προσδέξησθε ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως τῶν ἁγίων καὶ παραστήτε αὐτῇ ἐν ᾧ ἂν ὑμῶν χρῆσι πρᾶγματι· καὶ γὰρ αὕτη προστάτις πολλῶν ἐκευῶν

A A [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] NKJV Not [icon]

[Romans 15:29](#)

[NU-Text](#) omits of the gospel.

[Romans 16:5](#)

[NU-Text](#) reads Asia.

[Romans 16:11](#)

A A [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] [icon] NET Notes [icon]

[Romans 16:1](#)

<sup>1</sup> [tn](#) Or “deaconess.” It is debated whether διάκονος (*diakonos*) here refers to a specific office within the church. One contextual argument used to support this view is that Phoebe is associated with a particular church, Cenchrea, and as such would therefore be a deacon of that church. In the **NT** some who are called διάκονος are related to a particular church, yet the scholarly consensus is that such individuals are not deacons, but “servants” or “ministers” (other viable translations for διάκονος). For example, Epaphras is associated with the church in Colossians and is called a διάκονος in [Col 1:7](#), but no contemporary translation regards

▲ Vs ▼ ▲ Ch ▼ ▲ Bk ▼ ▲ Hit ▼

Rom. 16:1

The KJV/NKJV text says “servant”. The NIV11 says “deacon” from the same Greek word.

# Translation Differences

## Translation theories: Formal versus Functional

### ***Arguments for Preferring Functional Equivalent Translations:***

1. Functional translations are more easily understood by the reader.
2. Functional translations reflect a missionary approach to a culture, a fact which American Christians need to accept and then make necessary adjustments.
3. Functional translations are more effective in sharing with unchurched people.
4. Functional translations are more effective with children.
5. Functional translations are more faithful to the goal of the Bible writers...to communicate in the common language of the people.
6. Functional translations are easier for new Christians to understand.
7. Functional translations relate better to the lesser educated.
8. Functional translations are more effective with people who speak/read English as a second language.

# Translation Differences

## Translation theories: Formal versus Functional

### ***Arguments for Preferring Formal Equivalent Translations:***

1. Formal translations are more faithful to the original languages.
2. Formal translations use the only translation philosophy known to scholars prior to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
3. Formal translations protect the reader from translators' opinions and biases.
4. Formal translations are more theologically precise.
5. Formal translations seem to sound and feel more majestic and beautiful.
6. Formal translations allow *you* to interpret the meaning.
7. Formal translations have a longer shelf life.
8. Formal translations tend to showcase the various styles of the Bible writers better than functional versions

Source: Brett [Maragni](#)

# Translation Differences

## Translation theories: Formal versus Functional(Dynamic)

### APPENDIX: BIBLE TRANSLATIONS CHART

This is a chart of selected translations and the philosophies behind them; it is not meant to be precise. The format below shows two things: (1) There is a continuum extending from the NASB down to The Street Bible, but (2) there are three distinct translation philosophies, and there is a marked difference between an “essentially literal” translation, a “dynamic equivalent” translation, and a paraphrase. The upper-left represents more literal translation, and the bottom-right represents less literal translation.

#### *Essentially Literal*

NASB ESV KJV/NKJV RSV/NRSV

#### *Dynamic Equivalent*

NIV TNIV NLT CEV GNB

#### *Paraphrase*

NTME TLB TM TSB

#### *Key of Abbreviations:*

NASB—New American Standard Bible  
ESV—English Standard Standard  
NKJV—New King James Version  
KJV—King James Version  
RSV—Revised Standard Version  
NRSV—New Revised Standard Version  
NIV—New International Version  
TNIV—Today’s New International Version  
NLT—New Living Translation  
CEV—Contemporary English Version  
GNB—Good News Bible  
NTME—The NT in Modern English (Phillips)  
TLB—The Living Bible  
TM—The Message  
TSB—The Street Bible

# Translation Differences

## English Bible Translation Comparison Chart

Greek Text / Translation Theory	<u>Textus Receptus</u> Reformation Text (140,746 Greek words*)	Byzantine/Majority Text (140,722 Greek words°)	UBS/Nestle-Aland Critical Text (138,020 Greek words^)
Formal Equivalence	KJV/NKJV/KJV2000	--	NASB, ESV, RSV/NRSV
Functional Equivalence	--	--	NIV, TNIV, NLT, CEV, GNB

\*Scrivner

°Robinson/Pierpont

^NA27

Source: Andrew Wilson, *New Testament Textual Criticism Theory and Research*

# **Translation Differences**

**To make an informed decision about Bible translations, there are at least three important questions to ask:**

- 1. What is your understanding of the nature of scripture? (i.e., How do you harmonize the manuscript evidence with what Jesus and the apostles said about scripture?)**
- 2. What is your textual theory? (i.e., Which manuscripts/readings best match the originals regarding the differences?)**
- 3. What is your translation theory? (i.e., Which translation method best conveys the original meaning?)**

# How to Interpret the Bible

Travis Echols

## Lesson 3. Five Principles of Interpretation



# ***How to Interpret the Bible***

## **Six-week course outline**

1. Introduction, History of Interpretation, and the Bible as God's Word (pages 1-12)\*
2. Textual Criticism and Bible Translations (13-28)
-  3. Five Principles of Interpretation (29-34)
4. Genre and Language (35-57)
5. Eight Interpretation Fallacies and Bible Difficulties (57-65)
6. Inerrancy Debate and Case Studies (78-91)

*\*Reading to Grow* by Bernard James Mauser

# ***How to Interpret the Bible***

## **Six-week course outline**

### **5 Principles**

- 1. The text should be read in its normal sense**
- 2. The word of God is logical**
- 3. All the different types of language used in Scripture presuppose that there is a reality described**
- 4. Interpret personal experiences in light of Scripture, not vice versa**
- 5. The Scripture has one meaning, but it has many applications**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Working Definitions

- **Hermeneutics**--the rules for interpreting—to be used throughout the entire process of:
- **Exegesis**—what the author meant to his readers, and
- **Application**—how it relates to today

# ***How to Interpret the Bible***

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics (1982) is a continuation and elaboration of the meaning of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978), particularly of Articles XIII, XIV, and XVIII. It is a fuller statement on the relation of inerrancy to hermeneutics, especially of the meaning of the “grammatico-historical exegesis” mentioned in Article XIII of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy which reads:

*“We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.”*

# *How to Interpret the Bible*

The basic approach of all interpretation takes into consideration both grammar and history (known as the grammatical-historical context of a passage) to aid in understanding.\*

The literal sense of each passage should be sought by *the grammatical-historical method*, that is, by asking what is the linguistically natural way to understand the text in its historical setting.  
(Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics)

\*B. Mauser, *Reading to Grow*

# ***How to Interpret the Bible***

**You should first approach the Bible (or any text) with the grammatical-historical approach, i.e., using the normal rules of grammar and historical analysis, which is the literal/natural reading, the way we normally think and speak and write to each other.**

**(Start off assuming the writer was trying to communicate something--and not writing in secret code as a joke or riddle. An observation of the Bible text would justify this assumption, since it is so similar linguistically to other writings of the same time which had communication as it's purpose.)**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## *The grammatical-historical method*

Ordinary-Literal	Figurative-Literal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Normal, plain, ordinary usage</li><li>▪ Plainly expressed literal facts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Picturesque, out of the ordinary usage</li><li>• Figuratively-expressed literal facts</li></ul>
“Literal” (historical-grammatical) interpretation	

# How to Interpret the Bible

## *The grammatical-historical method*

In order to exegete, you should start with the grammatical-historical (g-h) hermeneutical method. Any other starting method (like allegorical interpretation) is arbitrary and subjective. The g-h method, if applied consistently, will help you identify figures of speech, allegories, etc., (as we correlate that meaning of the text with our knowledge of the real world--e.g., we know trees cannot clap their hands because they have no hands, so we see that phrase as a figure of speech).

A study of history can reveal the usage of various literary devices used in the writer's day.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## *The grammatical-historical method*

So the g-h method does not tie you down to a wooden-literal approach. But notice the hermeneutical foundation that was used to discover figures of speech was the g-h method, which is the way most people naturally tend to communicate. This g-h hermeneutical foundation keeps you out of a nonsensical vicious circle.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Recognizing Figures of Speech

Involving comparison

Figure of speech	Definition	References	Example
Simile	A comparison of one thing with another by using the word <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>	Luke 10:3; 1Pet 1:24	...behold, I send you out <u>as lambs</u> among wolves.
Metaphor	A comparison in which a thing represents another by using the word <i>is</i> or <i>are</i>	Isa 40:6; Matt 5:13	...All flesh <u>is grass</u> ...
Hypocatastasis (hi-poe-cas-tas'-ta-sis)	A comparison in which likeness is implied by a direct naming	Jn 1:29; Phil 3:2; Acts 20:29	<u>Behold! The Lamb of God</u> ...

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Recognizing Figures of Speech

Involving substitution

Figure of speech	Definition	References	Example
Metonymy (mə-tŏn'ə-mē)	A substituting of one word for another	Mark 3:25; 1Cor 10:21	You cannot <u>drink the cup</u> of the Lord and the cup of demons...
Synecdoche (sĭ-nĕk'də-kē)	Substituting of a part for the whole or the whole for the part	Prov 1:16; Luke 2:1	For <u>their feet</u> run to evil
Personification	Ascribing human characteristics or actions to inanimate objects or ideas or animals	Isa 35:1; 55:12; Rom 6:9; 1Cor 15:55	The <u>wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad</u> for them, And <u>the desert shall rejoice</u> and blossom as the rose;

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Recognizing Figures of Speech

Involving substitution (cont'd)

Figure of speech	Definition	References	Example
Anthropomorphism	Ascribing human characteristics or actions to God	Ps 8:3; 31:2; 2Chron 16:9	When I consider Your heavens, the work of <u>Your fingers</u>
Anthropopathism	Ascribing human emotions to God	Gen 6:6; Zech 8:1;	And <u>the Lord was sorry</u> that He had made man...and <u>He was grieved in His heart</u>
Zoomorphism	Ascribing animal characteristics to God or others	Ps 91:4	He shall cover you with <u>His feathers</u> , And under <u>His wings</u> you shall take refuge
Euphemism	Substituting an inoffensive or mild expression for an offensive or personal one	Acts 7:60; 1Thes 4:13-15	And when he had said this, he <u>fell asleep</u>

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Recognizing Figures of Speech

Involving overstatement or understatement

Figure of speech	Definition	References	Example
Hyberbole	An exaggeration in which more is said than is literally meant	Ps 6:6; 2Sam 1:23; Matt 23:24;	<u>All night I make my bed swim;</u> <u>I drench my couch with my tears</u>
Litotes ( 'lī də ,tēz)	An understatement in which less is said than is literally meant	Acts 12:18; 27:20	Then, as soon as it was day, <u>there was no small stir among the soldiers</u>
Irony	A kind of ridicule which sounds like a compliment	Job 12:2; Mk 7:9; 1Cor 4:8	No doubt you are the people, And <u>wisdom will die with you!</u>

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Recognizing Figures of Speech

Figure of speech	Definition	References	Example
Idiom	An expression peculiar to a given language or to a people in a certain geographical location. It is a string of words whose meaning is different than the meaning conveyed by the individual words.	1Kings 19:20; Jn 2:4; Mk 6:7; Rom 16:4	And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out <u>two by two</u>

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Recognizing Figures of Speech

An allegory is an extended metaphor and should be interpreted as such (e.g., Ps 80-8-15; Jn 10:1-18). The allegory is a figurative use and application of some fact or history. The allegory continually uses words in a metaphorical sense, and its narrative, however supposable within itself, is manifestly fictitious.

A parable on the other hand is itself such a supposable fact of history. The parable uses words on their literal sense, and its narrative never transgresses the limits of what might have been actual fact.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Starting with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic

There is some level of meaning/understanding you will receive from initially approaching the text this way.

Even with the book of Revelation, one can immediately observe by using this method that this book is written in a different style because of its images that don't correlate literally with the real world--and John's own interpretation of some of the imagery.

# How to Interpret the Bible

From that meaning, you can understand the literary genre of the text you're reading (e.g., Timothy is clearly a letter written to Timothy by Paul, not the recounting of the history of the early church)

By knowing the literary genre, you can use additional rules that apply only to that genre, thus **ENHANCING** your understanding.

But you can't start with genre. To identify the genre, you need a more fundamental hermeneutical method: the grammatical-historical approach.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## *Characteristics of Meaning*

“Meaning” is the thought or paradigm willed by the author to communicate to his envisaged reader

Meaning can reside then, in all three places at the same time:

- A. it can be in the mind of the author as the *meaner*,
- B. it can reside in the text as *meant*, and
- C. it can reside in the reader as *meaning*.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## *Characteristics of Meaning*

Meaning<sup>R</sup> – Meaning with respect to referent. What is being spoken about (the subject or object)

Meaning<sup>S</sup> – Meaning with respect to sense. What a word or sentence is conveying about a subject or object. Sense in a word, sentence, or paragraph refers to what is being described.

Meaning<sup>I</sup> – Meaning with respect to intention. We want the meaning the author intended. God, at times, intends a meaning beyond the human author's understanding (Jonah, Revelation). But we are never warranted in inventing meaning. Beware of the intentional fallacy: supposing the writer meant something other than what he wrote.

the  
original  
objective  
meaning  
(the aim of  
exegesis)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## *Characteristics of Meaning*

**Usages of the term “meaning” to which we are not referring in exegesis**

**Meaning<sup>V</sup> – Meaning with respect to value. An expression of personal preference. For example, “The gospel of John means more to me than Mark.”**

**Meaning<sup>E</sup> – Meaning with respect to entailment. “Nationalism means war.” “Justification means obedience.”**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Some preunderstandings necessary to understand the Bible

- The reality of the physical world outside of our minds
- That our senses are generally reliable (even to see/hear the words of the Bible)
- The difference between things (e.g., earth, man, tree, stars)
- The basic laws of logic
- A correct concept of God (e.g., Does God literally have wings and feathers [Ps 91:4]?)
- That the Bible has an objective meaning the author(s) intended
- That the Bible was written/translated in a language we can understand
- The correct use of history and language
- The correct starting method of interpreting the Bible (this cannot come from the Bible)



# How to Interpret the Bible

**1. First Principles: The self-evident reality of the external world and the undeniable first principles of logic, truth, and language provide a point of contact between the writer and the reader which allows objectivity in interpretation and a correct understanding of the biblical text.**

# How to Interpret the Bible

2. Hermeneutical spiral: Changeable aspects of the interpreter's pre-understanding can be adjusted by interacting with the truths of the text and adjudication between conflicting interpretations can proceed by reference to unchangeable first principles.

# How to Interpret the Bible

*The logical order and foundation of hermeneutics*

**You can't get your starting hermeneutics from the scripture itself, because you could never have any confidence that you properly understood the hermeneutical principles from the Bible unless your antecedent, extra-biblical hermeneutical principles used to understand the Biblical principles were correct to begin with. (Getting your hermeneutics from the Bible is like sawing the limb off that you're sitting on. The spiral needs a foundation.)**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Three Pillars of Bible Interpretation

### The Correct Interpretation of the Bible

Built on a solid philosophical, spiritual, theological, and hermeneutical foundation, integrating the appropriate disciplines of grammar, history, and theology will lead to greater and greater levels of correct understanding of the Bible

#### Grammatical Interpretation

- Literary genre classification
- Meaning of separate words
- Meaning of words in their connection
- Figurative use of words
- Interpretation of the thought

#### Historical Interpretation

- Personal characteristics of author or speaker
- Social circumstances of the author
- Circumstances peculiar to the writings

#### Theological Interpretation

- The Bible as a unity
- The fuller sense of scripture
- The symbolic and typical interpretation of scripture
- The implied sense of scripture

**3. Starting points:** a) a right standing and walk in Christ, b) a proper conception of the Bible, c) applying the grammatical-historical method (any other approach undermines objectivity), and d) performing exegesis before application.

**2. Hermeneutical spiral:** Changeable aspects of the interpreter's pre-understanding can be adjusted by interacting with the truths of the text and adjudication between conflicting interpretations can proceed by reference to unchangeable first principles.

**1. First Principles:** The self-evident reality of the external world and the undeniable first principles of logic, truth, and language provide a point of contact between the writer and the reader which allows objectivity in interpretation and a correct understanding of the biblical text.

# How to Interpret the Bible

Some unchangeable preunderstandings that allow objectivity in interpreting the Bible



- The reality of the physical world outside of our minds
- That our senses are generally reliable (even to see/hear the words of the Bible)
- The difference between things (e.g., earth, man, tree, stars)
- The basic laws of logic
- The correct starting method of interpreting the Bible (this cannot come from the Bible)

Writer	The rules and/or starting methodology	What it meant originally	How it applies today
Roy Zuck	Observation	Interpretation	Application
Robert Stein	Subject matter—the stuff of the Bible like marriage customs, military tactics, etc. (unbelievers as capable of understanding as believers)	Meaning (why the author wrote) (unbelievers as capable as believers to get a correct mental grasp)	Implications (author determined but author is unaware) and Significance (reader determined, reader's response to meaning, Holy Spirit needed)
Louis Berkhof	Hermeneutics (science or theory) (the rules of proper interpretation) Hermeneutics needed to exegete	Exegesis (art or practice) (includes integration/harmonization)	
Gordon Fee		Exegesis	Hermeneutics
Klein Blomberg Hubbard	Hermeneutics (science and art) essential to understanding what it meant and what it means (hermeneutical pre-understanding can change as we interact with the text)		
D.A. Carson	Hermeneutics--the nature of the interpretive process (techniques and pre-understandings) Hermeneutics serve exegesis	Exegesis—actually interpreting the text (“the text means such and such”)	
Chicago Statement	The study of the right principles for understanding the biblical text (both theoretically and spiritually/experientially)	<u>Exegesis</u> —extracting what the writer meant to his envisaged readers, and <u>Integration</u> —gaining full meaning by correlating it with other relevant biblical passages	Application—applying the exegeted teaching for the correcting and directing of our personal thought and action (requires spiritual commitment to God)

# How to Interpret the Bible

With no consistent terminology, my definitions are the generally more common and consistent with the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics

- **Hermeneutics**--the rules for interpreting the Bible—to be used throughout the entire process of:
- **Exegesis**—what the author meant to his readers, and
- **Application**—how it applies today

<b>The rules and/or starting methodology</b>	<b>What it meant originally</b>	<b>What it means to us/me today</b>
Hermeneutics-- rules of interpretation used throughout exegesis and application. The Holy Spirit influences through entire process of correct mental grasp (meaning) and significance--but is essential in the latter. Must start with proper hermeneutic of grammatical-historical. Hermeneutical spiral built on unchangeable pre-understandings.	Exegesis— extracting what author meant to his envisaged reader	Application— involves discerning implications and significance for today

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Unreliable Approach

Reader gives meaning (different for each reader)

Subjective, relative, untestable (no checks and balances), arbitrary

No correct interpretation

No way to reject an interpretation

No way to adjudicate between conflicting interpretations

Private interpretation for only an individual or group

## Ways to Interpret

~~Allegorical hidden meaning~~

~~Chance finger on page~~

~~Secret codes~~

~~Personal coded messages for my personal situation~~

Normal rules of language (like people normally speak and write). Allows for figures of speech

Function of illumination

Apostolic exceptions (Messianic fuller meaning)

Function of Inspiration

## Reliable Approach

Author gives meaning (locked in time)

Objective, testable (checks and balances), based on rules

Correct interpretation possible

A way to reject an interpretation

A way to adjudicate between conflicting interpretations

Meaning available to all believers

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Practices to follow

In Frank Turek's book, *Stealing from God*, he suggests using the acronym S.T.O.P. to discover the meaning of any given biblical text. It is as follows:

**S-Situation?** What's the historical situation? What do you need to know about the people and events in the story? What's the larger context?

**T-Type?** What's the type of literature? Is it historical narrative? Poetry? Prophecy? Law? Wisdom? Epistle? What literary devices are being used: Hyperbole? Parable? Metaphor? Apocalyptic Imagery?

**O-Object?** Who is the object of the text? Everyone? Specific people? Ancient Israel? Is it the Old or New Covenant?

**P-Prescription?** Is this passage prescriptive for us today or merely descriptive of an historical event?

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Practices to follow

1. Observe (Ask who, what, where, when, and how)

2. Find the meaning

a. A culture/time/language/geography gap exists between Bible times and the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Grammars, lexicons/dictionaries, concordances, commentaries, Bible handbooks, and other works can help us understand the language and culture of the ancient world)

b. Different kinds of literature and figures of speech are being used in the Bible. Different genres are to be interpreted differently. You wouldn't interpret the poetry books like you would the historical books. Bible writers used figures of speech as we do, so a literalistic interpretation would be detrimental to understanding the author's meaning.

c. Context is king. Always read and apply verses in their context. Word meanings are largely determined by their context in sentences. Except for the proverbs perhaps, sentences are understood by their paragraphs, which are understood by their books, which are understood by the entire Bible.

Outline from Jonathan Morrow, *Welcome to College*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Practices to follow

d. Pay attention to the words, grammar, and syntax used. (Grammars, concordances, commentaries, dictionaries/lexicons, and other works can help)

e. Scripture helps interpret scripture. If the Bible is God's word, it doesn't contradict or err in any way. Seeking to harmonize passages without exegetically distorting the text will lead to a proper interpretation. For example, James (James 2:24) must be speaking of a different type of justification or faith or works than Paul (Romans 4:4-5). And since their use of different parts of Abraham's life in their respective contexts bears this out, this is a reasonable harmonization.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Practices to follow

### As for Application

1. Always do exegesis before application. You can't know how to apply a passage until you know what the author meant.
2. Always ask who is saying what to whom. Context, context, context.
3. All scripture is *for* us but not all scripture is *to* us. Don't apply a verse to you that don't apply to you.

See my paper, *The Continuation and End of the Mosaic Law*

<http://studies.travisechols.com/The%20Continuation%20and%20End%20of%20the%20Mosaic%20Law.pdf>

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Practices to follow

### As for Application

1. Truths are absolute and universal. They are true for all people at all times. This is the irrefutable nature of truth (i.e., correspondence with reality).
2. Promises and commands are directed to certain people at certain times. Don't apply a promise or command to you that doesn't apply to you.
3. An implication that flows from a principle of a text (i.e., saying, teaching, command, or promise) may or may not apply to you. Other applicational factors must be considered (such as comparing the original context with your context).

# How to Interpret the Bible

The three most important factors in  
discovering the meaning

**Context, context, context**

# How to Interpret the Bible

Christ's strength to be content with plenty or in need (not to leap tall buildings)

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Phil 4:11-13)

# How to Interpret the Bible



# How to Interpret the Bible

A promise to the exiles in Babylon—  
not a promise to me

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile. (Jer 29:11-14)

# How to Interpret the Bible



**For I know the plans I have for you...  
(if you were ever captive in ancient Babylon)**

# How to Interpret the Bible

Travis Echols

## Lesson 4. Genre and Language



# How to Interpret the Bible

## Six-week course outline

1. Introduction, History of Interpretation, and the Bible as God's Word (pages 1-12)\*
2. Textual Criticism and Bible Translations (13-28)
3. Five Principles of Interpretation (29-34)
-  4. Genre and Language (35-57)
5. Eight Interpretation Fallacies and Bible Difficulties (57-65)
6. Inerrancy Debate and Case Studies (78-91)

*\*Reading to Grow* by Bernard James Mauser

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Canon and History

**Gen 1-2**

**Redemption Planned**

**Gen 3-11**

**Redemption Needed**

**Gen 12-Malachi**

**Redemption Prepared For**

**Gospels**

**Redemption Effected**

**Acts**

**Redemption Propogated**

**Epistles**

**Redemption Explained**

**Revelation**

**Redemption Consummated**

# **How to Interpret the Bible**

## **The Covenants and History**

**God's plan unfolds and progresses in history with greater and greater revelation**

**The Old Covenant was types, shadows, prophecies, and mysteries concealed**

**The New Covenant is anti-type, substance fulfillment, and mysteries revealed**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Covenants and History

**The New Testament is the advanced and final revelation. The Apostles by divine revelation understood meaning from the Old Testament in a fuller sense than even the OT writer (Sensus Plenior or “fuller sense”).**

**The Apostles laid the doctrinal foundation of the church. No further revelation of this nature is needed or provided (Heb 1:1; Rev 22).**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Covenants and History

How the covenants relate depends on the degree you weight continuity versus discontinuity.

Covenant theologians find more similarities (continuity) between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, using a less literal, spiritualizing hermeneutic. They feel liberty to spiritualize texts as the Apostles did.

Dispensational theologians find more differences (discontinuity) between the covenants, using a more literal hermeneutic. They feel spiritualizing texts was an apostolic function of revelation/inspiration versus illumination.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Covenants and History

Understanding the progressive nature of revelation resolves many simple interpretational controversies.

One can ask, “Is this interpretation consistent with the unfolding revelation of God in scripture?”

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Covenants and History

**Example: In Jesus' last moments on the cross, was He making Mary the mother of humanity or the church by this statement?**

*When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. (Jn 19:26-27)*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Covenants and History

*...Cont'd. Did Jesus declare Mary to be the spiritual mother of humanity or all believers?*

*The context (Matt 19:27) would suggest not. We have 30 years of the early church's history recorded in the Acts of the Apostles to learn if Mary was viewed in this way. We also have the teachings of the Apostles in the epistles to confirm or reject this interpretation.*

*The fact is Mary is seldom even addressed in Acts and the epistles, much less referred to as our spiritual Mother. Jesus, instead is given the preeminence in scripture.*

*The "absence of evidence where it would be expected" makes it clear that the apostles did not interpret Jesus' words to elevate Mary in this way. John simply was to take care of Mary as his mother and Mary to treat John as her son.*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Proverbs

**Definition:** A short, pithy saying that expresses a general truth - exceptions are allowed.

**Proverbs 3:9-10** Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Proverbs

**Proverbs 15:1** A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

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

**Matthew 26:52** For all who take the sword will perish by the sword

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Proverbs

The Problem of Job. Job's friends quote proverbs to Job. The problem is they universalize the general truth-like nature of a proverb. Job is the exception, but his friends failed to recognize it. They failed to realize that proverbs teach general truths but they cannot be applied universally.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Poetry

In poetry, words can be limited by rhythm or rhyme and therefore “poetic license” is employed which allows the writer to use words that may not be as precise or exact.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Poetry

In chapter 4 of Judges we are given a rather straightforward prose account of Deborah and Barak leading Israel in battle against Sisera. In chapter 5, the same account is recorded in poetic language in the form of a song (ballad).

*Lord, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water. The mountains quaked before the Lord, even Sinai before the Lord, the God of Israel. (Judg.5:4-5 )*

This is likely figurative language describing the literal fact that God led his people in battle that day.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Poetry

Psalm 18 is a good example of poetry found used by psalmists. Here, David is singing for joy because God heard his plea for help when facing enemies.

*The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire. And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and routed them. (Psalm 18:13-14)*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Poetry

1 Corinthians 15:22 *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

In this verse we see an example of Paul using a balanced rhythm to say something that is not intended as a statement supporting universalism

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Poetry

**Rom. 5:18 - *Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.***

**Rom. 5:18** In Romans 5:15, 17, 18, & 19; Paul use a balanced rhythm yet again. The point is to recognize these, and not let your theology be defined by instances where the words are controlled rhythm.

There are plenty of places where rhythm is not used from which we can determine that Paul was clearly not teaching universalism.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Types of Poetry

#### Synonymous Parallelism

*Example: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. (Matt 7:7-8)*

Ask, seek, and knock are essentially all expressing the same thought. Synonymous parallelism in poetry repeats the same thought in a variety of ways using a rhythmic pattern.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Types of Poetry

#### Antithetic Parallelism

The opposite of a synonymous parallelism is an antithetic parallelism in which the opposite thought is repeated.

Example of antithetic parallelism:

*So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. (Matt. 7:17-18)*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Types of Poetry

#### Step/Climactic Parallelism

In a step parallelism, the 1st and 2nd lines are neither synonymous or opposite; rather the 1st line is advanced by the 2nd line.

Examples: *Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.* (Matt 10:40)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Types of Poetry

#### Chiasmic Parallelism

These are parallel rhythms in which you find a pattern of parts that follow an ascending then descending order. (E.g. A, B-B, A)

*Example: Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matt 23:12)*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### Why use poetic language?

Counted together, there are over 200 examples of synonymous and antithetic parallelisms in the Gospels.

This rhythmic-type language lends itself to memorization which was especially important in a non-literal society which existed in the 1st century.

This is evident in the way a rhythm is helpful in remembering the words to a song.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Idioms

Idioms are a form of expression that if taken literally, in the context, would make little or no sense.

Modern examples:

"God bless you." (In response to a sneeze)

"Break a leg." (A saying when someone starts a new theatre play)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Idioms

#### Biblical examples

Joshua 8:17, Judges 4:16, 2 Kings 10:21 - "No one was left."  
(Exaggerated terminology)

1 John 3:17 - "Shutteth up his bowels." It's an idiom that means "have no pity"

Genesis 22:17ff, Genesis 41:43, Joshua 11:4, Judges 7:12 -  
"Sands of the seashore."

Matthew 17:20, 1 Corinthians 13:2 - "Faith to move mountains"

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Idioms

#### How to detect idioms

1. Found frequently
2. Cannot be interpreted literally in context

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Exaggeration

Jesus used overstatement and hyperbole, which is simply exaggeration for effect. Hyperbole is literally impossible while overstatement is literally possible but not intended to be interpreted in a literal fashion.

Exaggeration can have a negative connotation, i.e. someone stretching the truth. However, this is a perfectly acceptable and legitimate genre as long as both parties are aware that it is exaggeration. This was the case for Jesus' teaching in the NT.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Exaggeration

Hyperbolic - literally impossible

Hyperbole is exaggeration that is so great it is literally impossible:

*You blind guides, you strain at a gnat and swallow a camel!* (Matt 23:24)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Exaggeration

Another way to detect exaggerated language by Jesus is to note if it obviously conflicts with his teaching elsewhere.

*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26)*

We know that this is not intended to be interpreted literally because he teaches elsewhere to honor your father and your mother.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Exaggeration

Another way to detect exaggerated language by Jesus is to note if it conflicts with Jesus' behavior and actions elsewhere

*But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matt 6:6)*

This is an exaggerated message meant to discourage showy prayers for the purpose of calling attention to yourself. Obviously, this isn't saying you have to pray in secret. E.g. the Lord's Prayer is meant to be a corporate prayer.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Exaggeration

Why use exaggeration?

It is not enough to simply recognize exaggerated language and say, “I don’t need to interpret that literally”; then move on.

The very purpose of the overstatement is to call attention to what is being taught. It indicates that this subject is very significant and requires our attention.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Parables

Parables are brief or extended comparisons

Parables generally teach one main point. There are exceptions, but essentially a parable is a comparison that is teaching one primary lesson.

Avoid trying to read into the text (eisegesis) by pressing the details of the story. Read out of the text (exegesis) by looking for the main point.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Parables

#### Parable of the Hidden Treasure

*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (Matt. 13-44)*

This very brief parable is an example of a similitude. The simple point here is to teach that God's Kingdom is the greatest treasure one can have. This is placed beside the Parable of Fine Pearls which has the same point. There is no need to press the details further by trying to analyze the character of the man, etc.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Parables

#### Parable of the Dishonest Manager

Luke 16:1-8

Trying to press the details of this parable can lead to all sorts of distorted interpretations. However, the simple point to see is that the man was facing judgment and he prepared himself accordingly. He was not commended for his integrity; he was commended for his shrewdness. Are we at least as smart as this scoundrel? Are we prepared for judgment?

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Historical Narrative

From the early church and up through most of the 17th century, the facticity of Biblical narrative was not an issue.

The enlightenment brought rationalism in which people began to doubt the miracles included in the historical narratives of the bible.

The result was a polarization of two extremes: supernaturalists and non-supernaturalists.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Historical Narrative

#### Supernaturalists

This group accepted the miracles as historical events and therefore saw the literal meaning and the historical content of the text as being unified.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Historical Narrative

#### Non-supernaturalists (naturalists)

This group did not accept the miracles as fact but sought other ways of determining meaningfulness (significance) in the narratives. In their attempts to find meaning, three groups emerged:

Rationalists, Accomodationalists, Mythical Approach

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Historical Narrative

#### Rationalists

The interpretation should be limited to the reader's understanding of what the author's conscious intended meaning was.

However, the rationalists introduced an historical assessment aspect to interpretation. There was a tendency to look for meaning in what actually happened rather than finding meaning with what the author was teaching.

This presented a problem because when many of the events were "demiraculized", there was nothing left of significance.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Historical Narrative

#### Accommodationists

In this view, the Biblical authors knew that the miracles didn't really take place. They wrote to people who believed in miracles, so they used fabricated miracles in order to teach Christian values /principles.

This view preserved the intellectual capacity of the writer but not the integrity of the writer.

This approach is hard to accept because you have essentially dishonest writers teaching moral Christian values.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Historical Narrative

#### Mythical approach

The mythical approach preserved the integrity of the authors but brought into question their intellect. In this view, the authors believed the miracles but didn't consciously understand what they were really trying to communicate.

It's left up to the reader to find the subconscious meaning of the narrative. Trying to find some hypothetical subconscious meaning presents obvious problems but the main problem with this approach is in genre. Biblical narratives are not written in mythical literary form. Real events are described with real persons, in real places, and at real times.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Historical Narrative

#### Clues to interpreting historical narrative

The purpose of biblical narrative is not merely to tell what took place in the past. Rather, it is to relate these past events to biblical faith.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Historical Narrative

#### Clues to interpreting historical narrative (cont'd)

##### Context

The reader seeks to understand the particular narrative in light of the whole book. In turn, understanding the particular aids in understanding the whole.

The author assumes that his reader will be familiar with his whole book and will interpret a particular story in light of that.

This is similar to the way one would use a single piece of a puzzle based on where it fits in the whole.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Historical Narrative

#### Clues to interpreting historical narrative (cont'd)

##### Authorial Comments

Many times, the author will add a comment that will give the reader a clue about how to interpret the text. E.g.: *because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.* 1 Kings 15:5

These comments are not part of the narrative per se. These are editorial comments added which aid the readers in understanding the meaning. Often, these insertions can take the form summary statements.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Historical Narrative

#### Clues to interpreting historical narrative (cont'd)

##### Repetition

Another way the author shares his meaning with the reader is by repetition of key themes. Highlighting the authorial comments is a good way to identify these repeated themes.

E.g. in the Book of Judges, there are two repeated themes:

- Israel's cyclical experience of rebellion, retribution, repentance, and restoration.
- The absence of leadership (See 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of New Testament Letters

#### How words are used

**Frequency-** If a term occurs several times in a passage, it is a good indication that the meaning of the word is important to the meaning of the passage.

**The role of a word in the sentence-** Sometimes a particular word plays an essential part of a sentence. “By grace you were saved by faith...” Paul’s particular meaning of grace is important to know in understanding the sentence.

**Author definition-** Important words are sometimes noted for the reader when the author provides a definition. E.g. Paul refers to the Gospel in 1 Cor. 15:1; then proceeds to define it in verses 15:3ff.

<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/transcriptions/biblical-hermeneutics-dr-robert-stein>

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of New Testament Letters

#### How words are used

Letters written by the same author. The best way to determine how a writer is using a particular word is to look at how he uses that word elsewhere.

Use of the word in the same letter or passage. Often times, it is not necessary to go to a different letter. The author will use the word more than once in the same letter in a way that is helpful in arriving at his intended meaning. By comparing Paul's use of "folly" in 1 Cor. 3:19 to his use of the same word in 1 Cor. 2:14; we can see that he uses it a value judgment rather than a way of describing incomprehension.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of New Testament Letters

#### Understanding sentences

The key tool for understanding statements is grammar, which involves syntax structures. This varies between languages.

In English, the position of the words in a sentence determines the meaning of the sentence.

In Greek, the order of the words are irrelevant; rather it's the ending of the words that determines meaning.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

**Judgment Prophecy Rule - Judgment prophecy assumes, even if not stated, that if the people repent, judgment will not come.**

**Jonah 3:1-4, 10 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown! Jonah 3:1-4**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

The Language of Prophecy - Cosmic terminology. Prophets tend to speak in figurative language, using cosmic terminology.

Jeremiah 15:9 She who bore seven has grown feeble; she has fainted away; her sun went down while it was yet day; she has been shamed and disgraced. And the rest of them I will give to the sword before their enemies, declares the Lord. Jer. 15:9

This poetic language personifies Jerusalem.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

The Language of Prophecy - Cosmic terminology. Prophets tend to speak in figurative language, using cosmic terminology.

Amos 8:9 And on that day,” declares the Lord God, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.

Ezekiel 32:7-8 When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord God.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

Cosmic terminology applied to Pentecost (circa AD 33)

**Acts 2:19-21** And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Here, Peter explains the events at Pentecost by saying “this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

Cosmic terminology applied to John the Baptist's ministry (circa AD 30)

Luke 3:4-6 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

John the Baptist is referring to the present mission of Jesus but there were no actual geographic changes taking place. This is a picturesque way of saying "make his path easy".

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

**The Fulfillment of Prophecy – Double or progressive fulfillment with a near term and far term applications.**

**Progressive fulfillment is the idea that prophecies do not have to be fulfilled in a single event but may have a near-term and far-term fulfillment or may be fulfilled in a succession of several events.**

**An example is the Devil's predicted defeat (Gen 3:15; Matt 12:28; Jn 12:31; Heb 2:14; Rom 16:20; Rev 20:10). These verses show a succession of defeats culminating in his final defeat.**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

The progressive unfolding of God's activity in history often calls for an already/not yet hermeneutic

Example: Is the kingdom of God realized now or is it to be realized in the future?

#### Already

*...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom 14:16-17)*

#### Not yet

*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom... (2Tim 4:1)*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

#### The already/not yet aspect of the Kingdom of God

The kingdom of God is everlasting and universal (1Chron 29:11-12; Psalm 10:16; 29:10; 103:19; 145:13). The mediatorial aspect of God's kingdom was ultimately rejected by Israel during the Old Testament and during Christ's ministry.

The apostles then turned to the Gentiles with the kingdom message. Through the remnant of saved Jews and Gentiles (the church) the kingdom was inaugurated during Christ's ministry and is a present reality for believers today (Psalm 29:10; Matt 12:28; 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 11:20-21; 17:20-21; 1Cor 4:19-20; Rom 14:17; Col 1:13).

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

The already/not yet aspect of the Kingdom of God

The kingdom also has a future aspect which has not yet occurred (Zech 14:9; Matt 6:10; 7:21; 19:28; 25:31; 2Tim 4:1).

The kingdom is spiritual (Matt 12:28; 21:43; 23:13; Lk 17:20-21; Jn 18:36, etc.) and earthly (Jer 23:5; Matt 5:5; 8:11-12; Lk 19:11; Rom 8:18-23; 1Cor 15:22-28; Rev 5:10; 11:15; 21:1).

Christ's second coming will bring in the fulfillment of the kingdom which has already begun but not consummated (Rev 3:21; 12:5; 19:11-16).

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

#### Progressive fulfillment (con'd)

Another example is the Messianic prophecies. The two comings of Messiah, one to suffer and one to reign, was not obvious until the advanced revelation of the New Testament revealed this multiple aspect of Messiah's appearing.

This principle is also observed with Antichrist(s) (Dan 8; Dan 11; Matt 24; 1Jn 2:18-23; 2Thes 2; Rev 20). These examples do not show separate fulfillments of the same prophecy, but rather a progressive realization of the prophecy with the near term being a part of the full manifestation. Many other examples are found in scripture (2Sam 7:1-16; 1Chron 17:1-14; 22:6-10; Luke 1:31-33).

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

#### Progressive fulfillment versus Preterism

Regarding Christ's second coming, the Olivet discourse (Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 17 and 21) has reference to both the destruction of the temple (Matt 24:1-3; Luke 21) which occurred in A.D. 70 and the second coming at the end of this age (Matt 24:3; Matt 24:36-25:46). Christ's cleansing of the temple (Jn 2:13-17; Matt 21:12-13) was a preview of A.D. 70 when the temple would be completely destroyed. The local judgment against Israel in A.D. 70 was a type or rehearsal or preview of the worldwide visible coming of Christ in the future to judge the world.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### The Genre of Prophecy

#### Progressive fulfillment versus Preterism

Progressive fulfillment allows verses in the Olivet discourse to apply to both the destruction of the temple in Jesus' generation's lifetime and to His visible, personal coming in the future. Note: Since Christ's first coming we have been in the last days (Acts 2:17; Heb 1:2; 1Pet 1:18-20).

He came to Israel first with salvation (Matt 10:5-6), then to the whole world. Likewise, in judgment, he started with first-century unbelieving Israel in A.D. 70, and then (after the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled at the end this age) He will judge the whole unbelieving world at His appearing (2Thes 1:7-9).

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### Prophecy Application in the New Testament

Expansion versus Replacement.

Are Old Testament prophecies applied by the apostles to the Church age expanded and/or redefined with a New Testament meaning or simply expanded to the church with a future literal Jewish fulfillment still to come?

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### Prophecy Application in the New Testament.

Matthew 2 and Hosea - Implications of the prophecy

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. (Hosea 11:1-2)

This is a fairly clear reference to the Exodus under Moses. However, Matthew uses this passage from Hosea in reference to Joseph and Mary taking Jesus to Egypt in order to escape Herod.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

**Prophecy Application in the New Testament. Expansion versus Reinterpretation?**

**Was the Abrahamic land promise universalized to the whole world?**

**Rom 4:13 - For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### Premillennial Dispensationalism versus Covenant Amillennialism

There are two major frameworks of interpretation regarding the fulfillment of the Old Testament law and kingdom prophecies and the interrelation of the covenants.

<http://studies.travisechols.com/Second%20Coming%20Glossary.pdf>

<http://studies.travisechols.com/Eschatology--two%20major%20schools%20of%20interpretation.pdf>

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

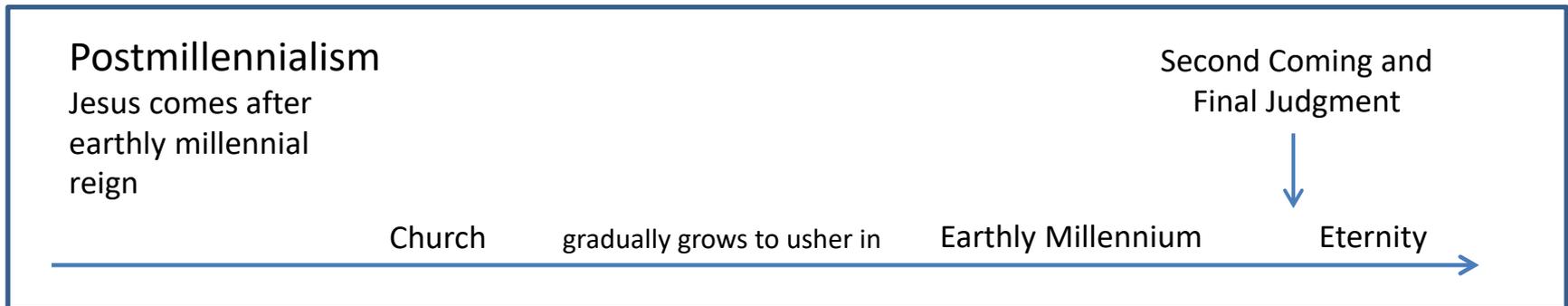
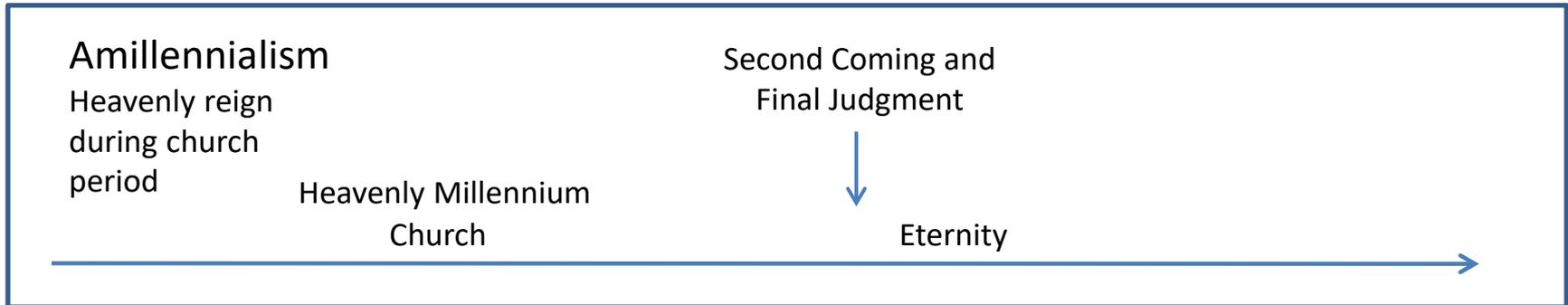
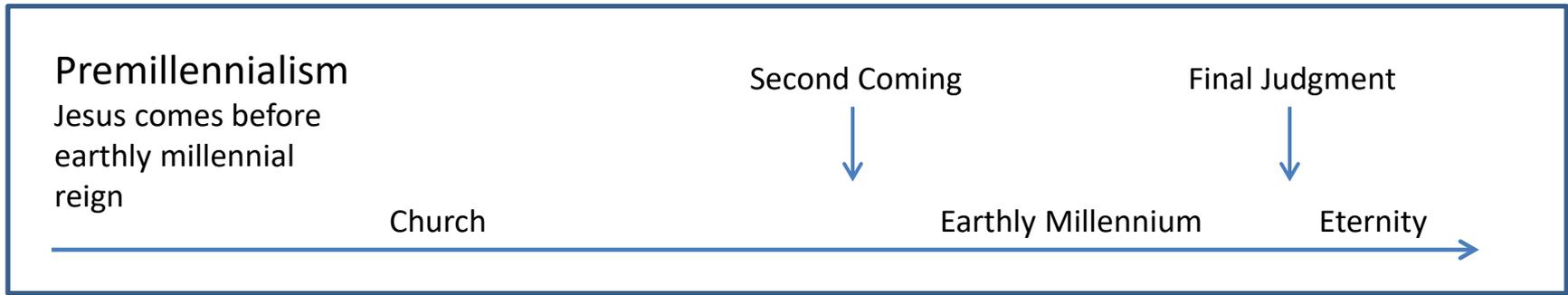
### Prophecy Application in the New Testament. Expansion/Progression versus Reinterpretation?

Are the children of Abraham now redefined as all believers in Christ (Matt 3:9; Jn 8:39-40; Rom 2:28-29; 9:6; Gal 3:7-9,16)?

*Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.  
(Gal 3:7)*

*For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.  
(Rom 2:28-29)*

# Three Basic Views of Millennium



Millennium -- A thousand years (from the Latin, *mil* = thousand and *annum* = year) referenced in Revelation 20:1-10

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### Premillennial Dispensationalism versus Covenant Amillennialism

#### 1. Premillennial Dispensationalism

Old Testament prophecies are to be interpreted literally. A literal interpretation takes verses to mean what they say on their face as they would have been normally understood by the original writers and readers (e.g., Eze 40-48) or else can be subjectively interpreted to mean most anything.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### Premillennial Dispensationalism versus Covenant Amillennialism

#### 1. Premillennial Dispensationalism

A consistent literal interpretation of the OT points forward to a glorious, earthly messianic rule with temple worship and unsaved heathen under the rule of Messiah.

The apostles' application of OT prophecies that sometimes expands and adds to their literal natural meaning, does not negate their literal fulfillment.

Luke 1:31-33, Matt 19:28, Acts 1:6-8, Romans 11, and Rev 20 are New Testament (NT) verses that corroborate the expectation of a future earthly kingdom.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### Premillennial Dispensationalism versus Covenant Amillennialism

#### 1. Premillennial Dispensationalism

The church is new and doesn't erase functional distinctions of Jews and Gentiles within it. Gentiles have become partakers of the Jewish promises through faith but there can be a functional difference of saved Jews and saved Gentiles in the body of Christ (just as male and female functional distinctions remain in the oneness of Christ [Gal 3:28; Acts 15:19,23]).

There is a future fulfillment of all the unconditional, irrevocable promises of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenant with the nation of Israel.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### Premillennial Dispensationalism versus Covenant Amillennialism

#### 2. Covenant Amillennialism

The New Testament often reinterprets the Old Testament in a non-literal manner (e.g., The temple is now Christ [Jn 2:19] and the Church [1Cor 3:17; 1Tim 3:15]; Israel is now Christ [Gal 3:16] and the Church.

A future literal fulfillment would subvert the progressive advancement of redemption, reverting back to the inferior shadows of the Old Covenant (e.g. priests and animal sacrifices in the future) which have already been fulfilled in Christ and the church (Heb 7:12; 8:13; 10:1-10, 18).

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### Premillennial Dispensationalism versus Covenant Amillennialism

#### 2. Covenant Amillennialism

Understanding the typological nature of the Old Covenant, the apostles gave many OT concepts a different meaning than their Old Covenant meaning

The OT prophets did not clearly see their true spiritual meaning as did the apostles (Luke 24:45; 1Peter 1:9-12; 2Cor 3:14-16).

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### Premillennial Dispensationalism versus Covenant Amillennialism

#### 2. Covenant Amillennialism

The church is the saved of all ages and erases all distinctions between Jews and Gentiles within it. There has always been only one people of God.

Unsaved ethnic Israel's promises are either already fulfilled in the past, forfeited due to unbelief, to be fulfilled in the new heavens and earth, or fulfilled through the church without a Jew-Gentile distinction (Gal 3:28; Gal 5:6; 6:15; Col 3:10-11).

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Literary Genres and Rules

### Premillennial Dispensationalism versus Covenant Amillennialism

#### 2. Covenant Amillennialism

Israel's salvation in Romans 11 simply speaks of them becoming Christians; nothing is mentioned of a Jewish geo-political kingdom.

The kingdom has been permanently taken away from Israel and given to the church (Matt 8:11-12; 21:43; Gal 6:16).

The New Testament leaves no room for a millennial age after the second coming but teaches the resurrection and judgment of all believers and unbelievers and the burning up of the earth at Christ's coming at the last day.

# How to Interpret the Bible

Travis Echols

## Lesson 5. Eight Interpretation Fallacies and Bible Difficulties



# How to Interpret the Bible

## Six-week course outline

1. Introduction, History of Interpretation, and the Bible as God's Word (pages 1-12)\*
2. Textual Criticism and Bible Translations (13-28)
3. Five Principles of Interpretation (29-34)
4. Genre and Language (35-57)
-  5. Eight Interpretation Fallacies and Bible Difficulties (57-65)
6. Inerrancy Debate and Case Studies (78-91)

*\*Reading to Grow* by Bernard James Mauser

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Order of Disciplines



Hermeneutics:

How do we understand what is communicated?

Linguistics:

How do we communicate what we know?

Epistemology:

How do we know that which is?

Metaphysics:

What is that which is?

Reality:

That which is.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Unreliable Approach

Reader gives meaning (different for each reader)

Subjective, relative, untestable (no checks and balances), arbitrary

No correct interpretation

No way to reject an interpretation

No way to adjudicate between conflicting interpretations

Private interpretation for only an individual or group

## Ways to Interpret

~~Allegorical hidden meaning~~

~~Chance finger on page~~

~~Secret codes~~

~~Personal coded messages for my personal situation~~

Normal rules of language (like people normally speak and write). Allows for figures of speech

Function of illumination

Apostolic exceptions (Messianic fuller meaning)

Function of Inspiration

## Reliable Approach

Author gives meaning (locked in time)

Objective, testable (checks and balances), based on rules

Correct interpretation possible

A way to reject an interpretation

A way to adjudicate between conflicting interpretations

Meaning available to all believers

# How to Interpret the Bible

<b>The rules and/or starting methodology</b>	<b>What it meant originally</b>	<b>What it means to us/me today</b>
Hermeneutics-- rules of interpretation used throughout exegesis and application. The Holy Spirit influences through entire process of correct mental grasp (meaning) and significance--but is essential in the latter. Must start with proper hermeneutic of grammatical-historical. Hermeneutical spiral built on unchangeable pre-understandings.	Exegesis— extracting what author meant to his envisaged reader	Application— involves discerning implications and significance for today

# How to Interpret the Bible

1. Author communicates a meaning
2. Meaning is history, fixed in time
3. Dual author, but by means. What God meant is what the apostles meant (exceptions being dictation and apostolic “fuller sense”)
4. Natural meaning is what the author meant
5. Two human authors: e.g., John writing about what Jesus said
6. Text is a collection of sharable symbols arranged in different ways to communicate
7. People write to be understood. An exception is code in times of war

# How to Interpret the Bible

8. To be understood they use the norms of language
9. So they use words, grammar, verb tenses, clauses, etc. the way their reader would understand
10. Word meanings: dictionary  
Words in combination: grammar  
Word order important in English; not so much in inflective language like Greek
11. As reader, what is the form of literature?  
Poems are different from history (To discern this, you start with grammatical-historical method)
12. What additional rules for the genre to get the author's meaning

# How to Interpret the Bible

13. Significance is how you give credence or credibility. It is the reader's volitional response, your yes or no to the meaning. It's the value placed on the meaning.
14. Significance has to do with the reader's subjective assent, conviction, persuasion
15. Application of a text requires the objective meaning and/its relevant implication in combination with the reader's subjective significance

# How to Interpret the Bible

- The *author* determines the meaning of a text. The reader discovers it.
- The *reader* determines the text's personal significance

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Three Pillars of Bible Interpretation

### The Correct Interpretation of the Bible

Built on a solid philosophical, spiritual, theological, and hermeneutical foundation, integrating the appropriate disciplines of grammar, history, and theology will lead to greater and greater levels of correct understanding of the Bible

#### Grammatical Interpretation

- Literary genre classification
- Meaning of separate words
- Meaning of words in their connection
- Figurative use of words
- Interpretation of the thought

#### Historical Interpretation

- Personal characteristics of author or speaker
- Social circumstances of the author
- Circumstances peculiar to the writings

#### Theological Interpretation

- The Bible as a unity
- The fuller sense of scripture
- The symbolic and typical interpretation of scripture
- The implied sense of scripture

**3. Starting points:** a) a right standing and walk in Christ, b) a proper conception of the Bible, c) applying the grammatical-historical method (any other approach undermines objectivity), and d) performing exegesis before application.

**2. Hermeneutical spiral:** Changeable aspects of the interpreter's pre-understanding can be adjusted by interacting with the truths of the text and adjudication between conflicting interpretations can proceed by reference to unchangeable first principles.

**1. First Principles:** The self-evident reality of the external world and the undeniable first principles of logic, truth, and language provide a point of contact between the writer and the reader which allows objectivity in interpretation and a correct understanding of the biblical text.

Sources: Louis Berkhof *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*; Thomas Howe *The Jesus Quest* chapters 13 and 14

# How to Interpret the Bible

## 8 Errors to Avoid

1. **Psychoanalysis fallacy**
2. **Word study fallacies**
3. **Error of allegorizing**
4. **Error of spiritualizing**
5. **Error of moralizing**
6. **Error of focusing on “the facts”**
7. **Error of imitating Bible characters**
8. **Confusing the role of the Holy Spirit**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Fallacies to avoid



1. **Psychoanalysis fallacy**—  
We have to get into the mind of the author and know *why* he wrote it in order to know *what* he wrote. Speculative and commits infinite regress error. (sometimes called the intentional fallacy)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Fallacies to avoid



**2. Word Study fallacies—**giving a word the wrong meaning based on its root meaning, ignoring the word's wide lexical range and its context and grammar.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Fallacies to avoid



3. Allegorizing—going beneath the text for the “deeper” real meaning. This method is arbitrary, subjective, and self-refuting.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Fallacies to avoid



4. **Spiritualizing**— discarding the earthly, physical, historical reality for a spiritual analogy (Jesus stilling the storm is “stilling the storms of life”.) Arbitrary, subjective, and self refuting.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Fallacies to avoid



5. Moralizing—Drawing moral inferences, making descriptive passages prescriptive. (Jesus told Peter, “Feed my sheep”. Our response, “We have a task.”)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Fallacies to avoid



6. Focusing on “the facts”—focusing so much on the historical aspects that the meaning and significance of the text is missed

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Fallacies to avoid



7. Imitating Bible characters—taking on an unscriptural imitation of a Bible character, confusing biblical description (of what certain people did) with prescription (how we ought to be)

# How to Interpret the Bible

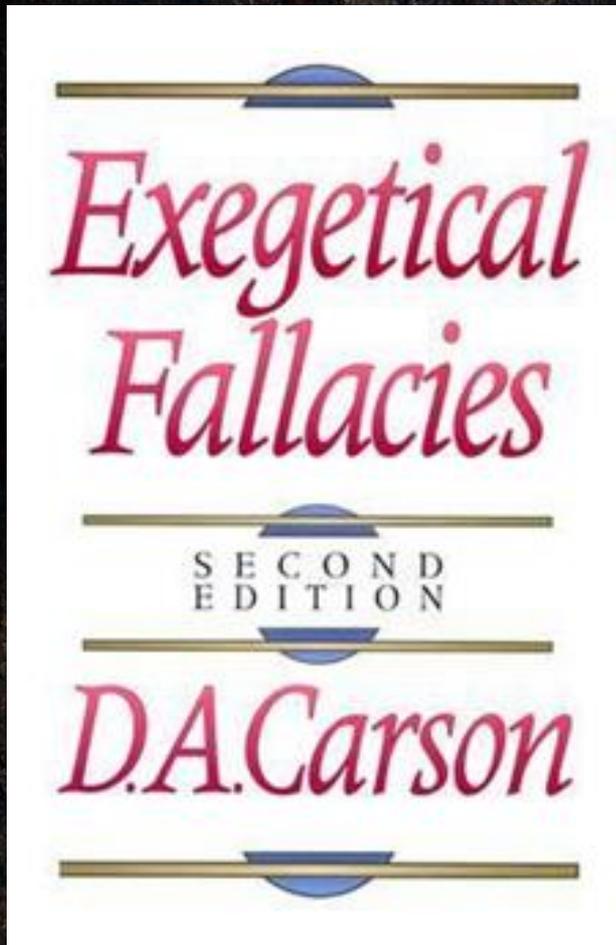
## Fallacies to avoid



8. Confusing the role of the Holy Spirit—assuming the Holy Spirit bypasses ordinary means (of study, etc) for us to understand a text (i.e., using the Holy Spirit as a shortcut for diligent study which the Holy Spirit commanded [2Tim 2:15])

# How to Interpret the Bible

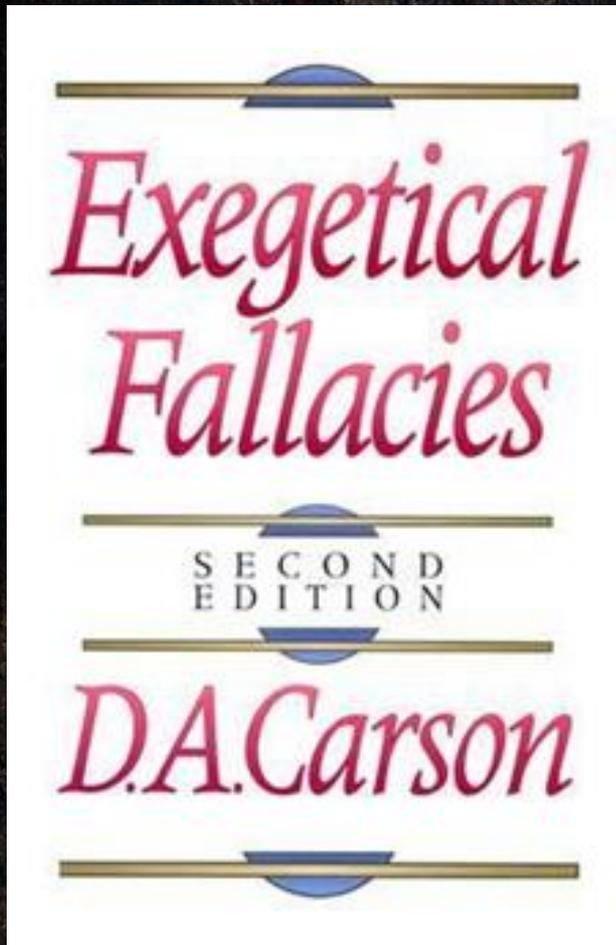
## Word Study Fallacies to avoid



The root fallacy (p. 28) - includes eisegesis meaning into words based on the etymology of their component parts. (e.g., "...there is nothing intrinsic to the verb *agapao* or the noun *agape* to prove its real meaning or hidden meaning refers to some special kind of love." Jn 3:35; 2Tim 4:10; 2 Sam 13:14 LXX)

# How to Interpret the Bible

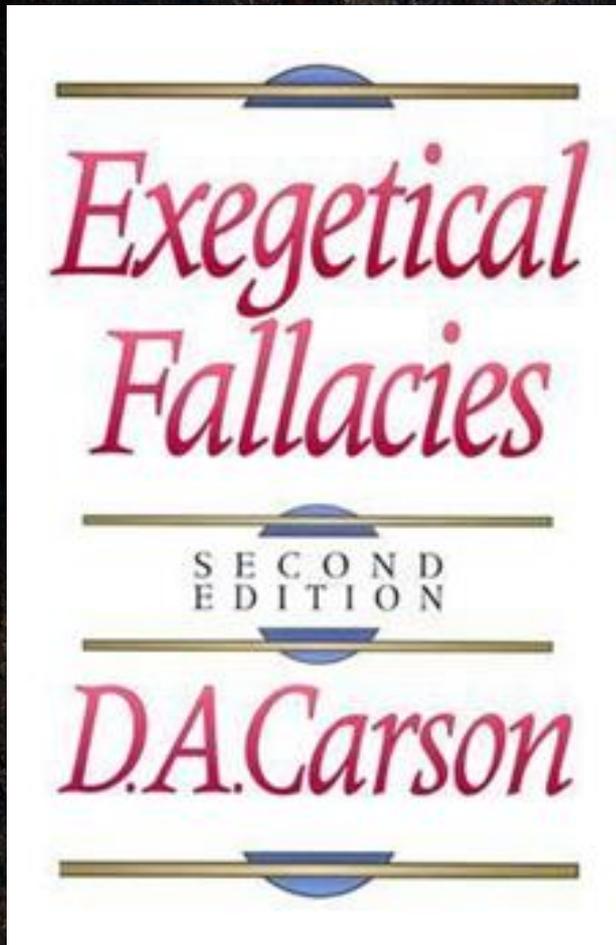
## Word Study Fallacies to avoid



The semantic anachronism fallacy (p. 33) - when a late use of a word is read back into earlier literature. (e.g., dynamis in Rom 1:16 “power of God” does not mean dynamite.)

# How to Interpret the Bible

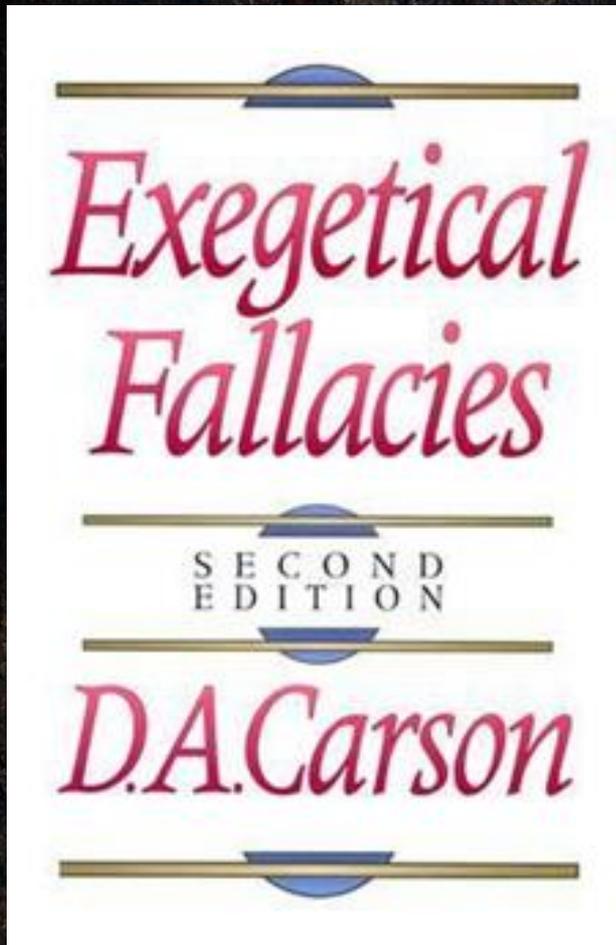
## Word Study Fallacies to avoid



The “appeal to unknown or unlikely meanings” fallacy (p. 37)-- such as that done by gender-role egalitarian scholars with the word κεφαλή (apparently motivated to support their loaded theological agenda).

# How to Interpret the Bible

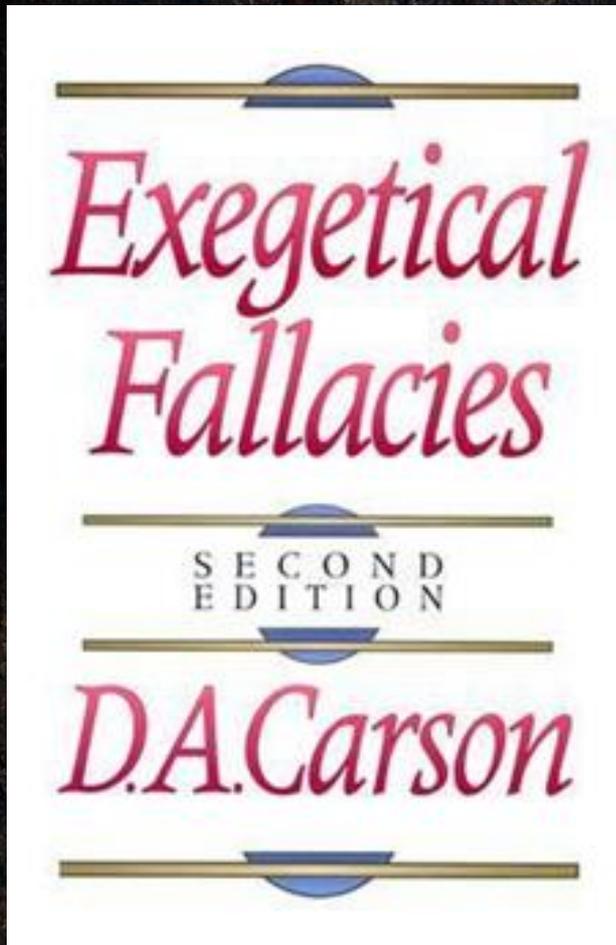
## Word Study Fallacies to avoid



The “unwarranted adoption of an expanded semantic field” fallacy (p. 60)-- which consists of ignoring the specificity of a word’s meaning in its particular context and importing into it meaning derived from its broader semantic range

# How to Interpret the Bible

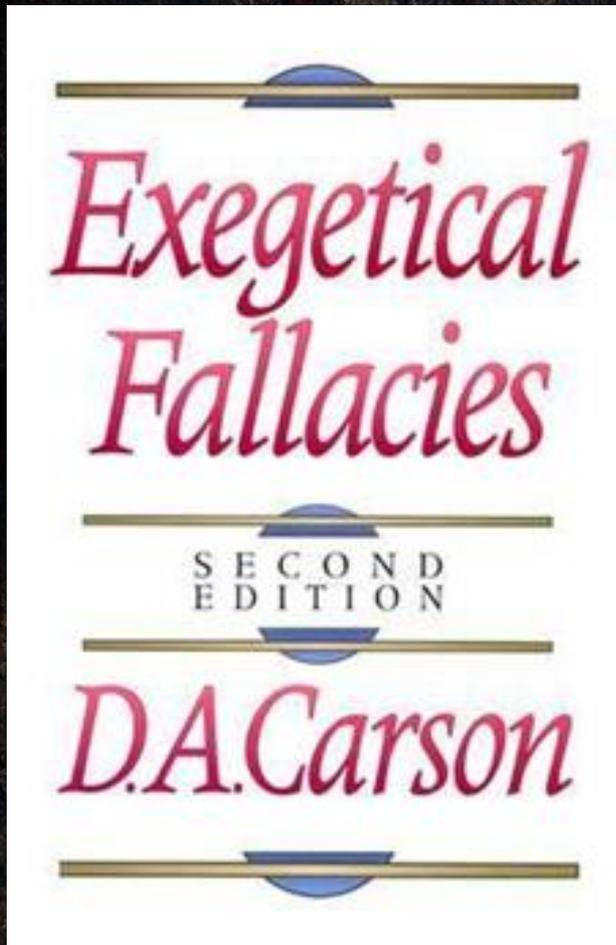
## Other Fallacies to Avoid



- Grammatical Fallacies-- connected with various tenses and moods and those associated with syntactical relationships
- Logical Fallacies – errors in logic such as improper appeal to the law of the excluded middle, appeal to selective evidence, etc.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Other Fallacies to Avoid



- Presuppositional and History Fallacies - post-modern, relativistic approach to epistemology and the uncontrolled “historical reconstruction” (separating the real history from the text) of liberal scholarship often used to subvert inerrancy

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Role of the Holy Spirit



1. The Spirit's ministry in Bible interpretation does not mean He gives new revelation.
2. The role of the Spirit in interpreting the Bible does not mean that one's interpretations are infallible.
3. The work of the Spirit in interpretation does not mean that He gives some interpreters a mental acuity for seeing truths under the surface that are not evident to any other dedicated Bible students.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Role of the Holy Spirit



4. The role of the Holy Spirit in Bible interpretation means that the unregenerate do not welcome and apply God's truth, though they are able to comprehend many of its statements cognitively.
5. The Spirit's role in hermeneutics does not mean that only Bible scholars can understand the Bible.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Role of the Holy Spirit



6. The Holy Spirit's role in interpreting Scripture requires spiritual devotion on the part of the interpreter.
7. The Holy Spirit in interpretation means that lack of spiritual preparedness hinders accurate interpretation.
8. The role of the Spirit in interpretation is no substitute for diligent study.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Role of the Holy Spirit



9. The Spirit's work in biblical interpretation does not rule out the use of study helps such as commentaries and Bible dictionaries.
10. The ministry of the Holy Spirit in Bible interpretation does not mean interpreters can ignore common sense and logic.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Role of the Holy Spirit



11. The place of the Holy Spirit in interpreting the Bible means that He does not normally give sudden intuitive flashes of insight into the meaning of Scripture.
12. The Spirit's ministry in interpreting the Bible is included in but not identical with illumination.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Role of the Holy Spirit



13. The role of the Spirit in scriptural interpretation does not mean that all parts of the Bible are equally clear in meaning.
14. The Spirit's work in interpretation does not result in believers having a comprehensive and completely accurate understanding of the entire Scriptures.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Other fallacies to avoid



- **Concordism**—Assigning to an ancient text a modern scientific fact or understanding that was unknown at the time of the writing (so the scientific fact and text are in concord)
- **Parallelomania**— Interpreting a Bible passage by drawing a strong parallel or assuming a strong influence from a piece of literature that actually has little or no relevance to the biblical text

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Other fallacies to avoid



- **Fallacy of incomplete evidence--**  
Confirming a particular position while ignoring a significant portion of the biblical data that may contradict that position (i.e., cherry picking fallacy)

# How to Interpret the Bible

*The danger of reading between the lines*



Gordon Donald Fee is an American-Canadian Christian theologian and an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God.

**Gordon Fee talks about reading between the lines to get the implications from the text.**

**Caution is called for here. Radical departures from the plain reading of biblical text are not justified by extra-biblical sources.**

# How to Interpret the Bible

*The danger of reading between the lines*

Extra-biblical sources can enhance our understanding, but they should never radically altar our interpretation such that we are eisegeting (reading things into the text that *aren't* there) versus exegeting (extracting from the text what *is* there).

After all, if an extra-biblical “fact” causes you to distort the meaning of inspired text (e.g., liberation theology, feminist hermeneutic, homosexual hermeneutic), you are trusting some other source more than you are the Bible.

# How to Interpret the Bible

*The danger of reading between the lines*

**The Bible is God's inspired, inerrant word. No extra-biblical sources have that authority. The Bible must judge all other sources when a conflict arises, not the other way around. Adding to, taking from, or distorting a text is never sound exegesis, no matter what you think you know from other sources.**

# How to Interpret the Bible

*The danger of reading between the lines*

The intentional fallacy forces the literary critic to assume the role of cultural historian or that of a psychologist who must define the growth of a particular artist's vision in terms of his mental and physical state at the time of his creative act.

# How to Interpret the Bible

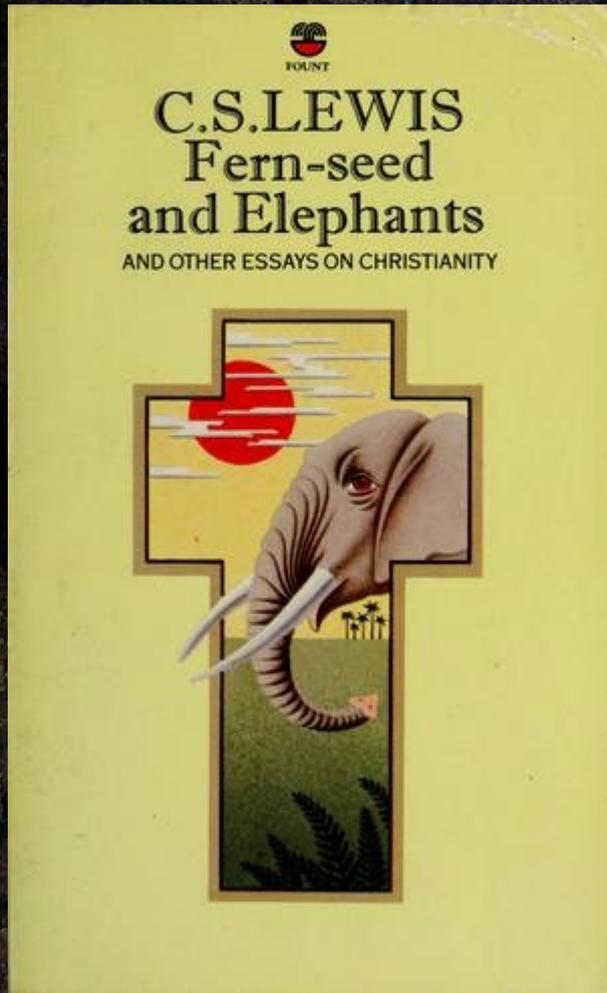
*The danger of reading between the lines*

If you have to know the hidden intention of the author to understand his text, even if the author was here writing it down (or speaking), you would have to question his hidden intent before you could understand his explanation, etc. and you could never understand his words because he would always have to explain his words by more words.

This is an infinite regress in which no meaning can be communicated.

# How to Interpret the Bible

*The danger of reading between the lines*

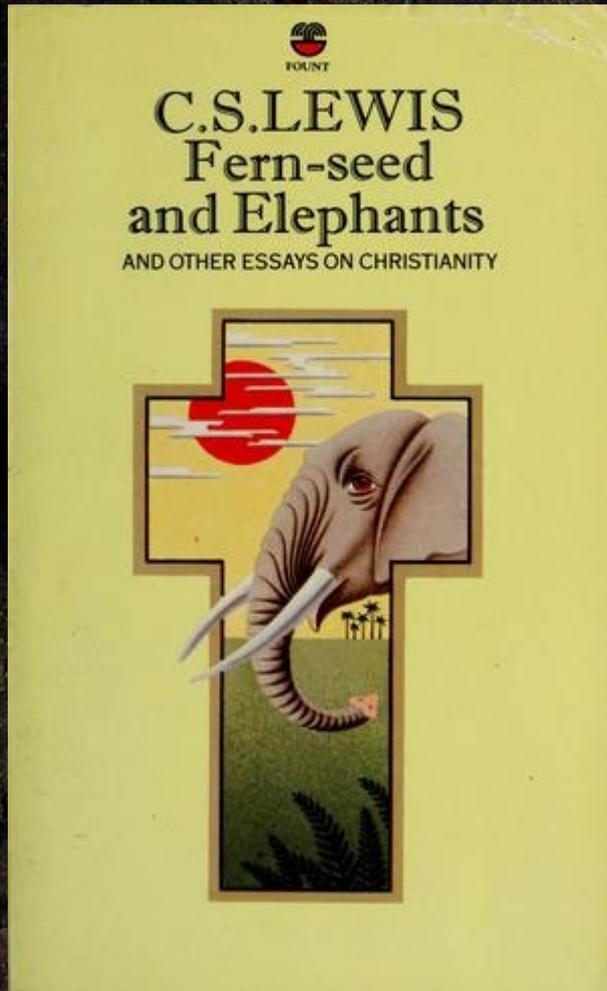


## *C.S Lewis' Fern-Seed and Elephants*

All this sort of criticism attempts to reconstruct the genesis of the texts it studies; what vanished documents each author used, when and where he wrote, with what purposes, under what influences... This is done with immense erudition and great ingenuity. And at first sight it is very convincing....

# How to Interpret the Bible

*The danger of reading between the lines*

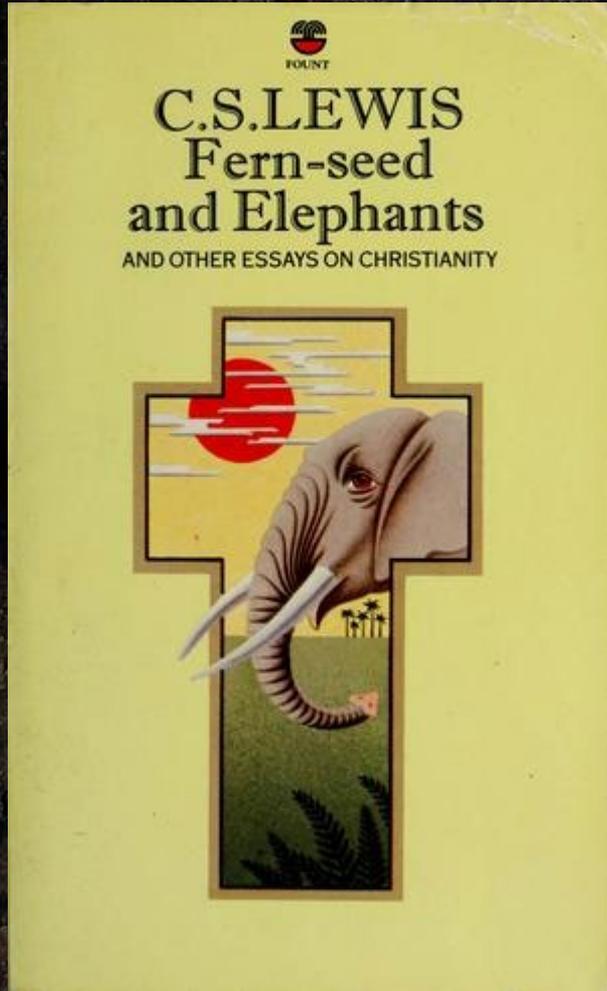


## *C.S Lewis' Fern-Seed and Elephants*

....What forearms me against all these reconstructions is the fact that I have seen it all from the other end of the stick. I have watched reviewers reconstructing the genesis of my own books in just this way...

# How to Interpret the Bible

*The danger of reading between the lines*

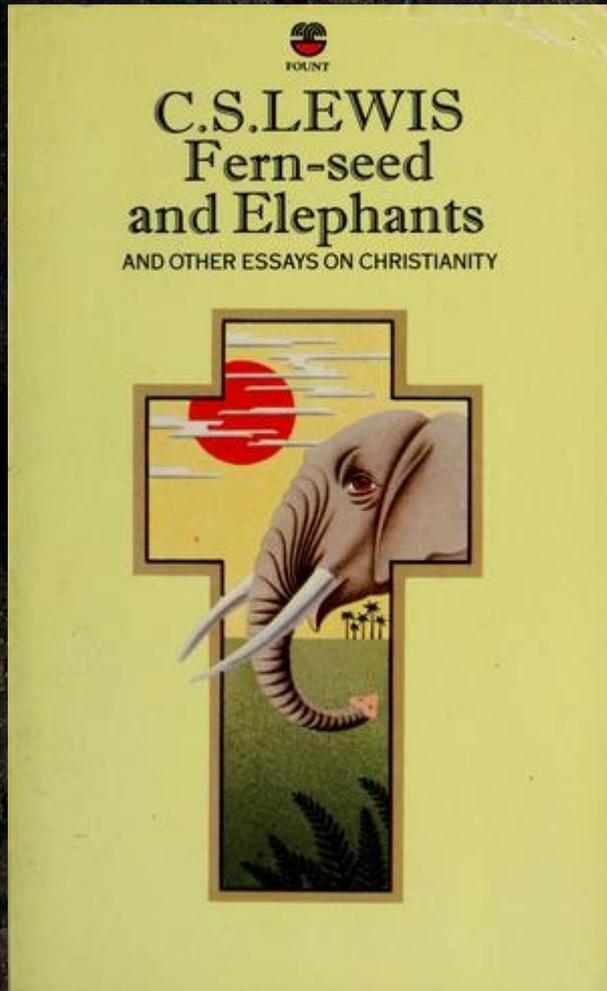


## *C.S Lewis' Fern-Seed and Elephants*

...My impression is that in the whole of my experience not one of these guesses has on any one point been right; that the method shows a record of 100 percent failure...

# How to Interpret the Bible

*The danger of reading between the lines*

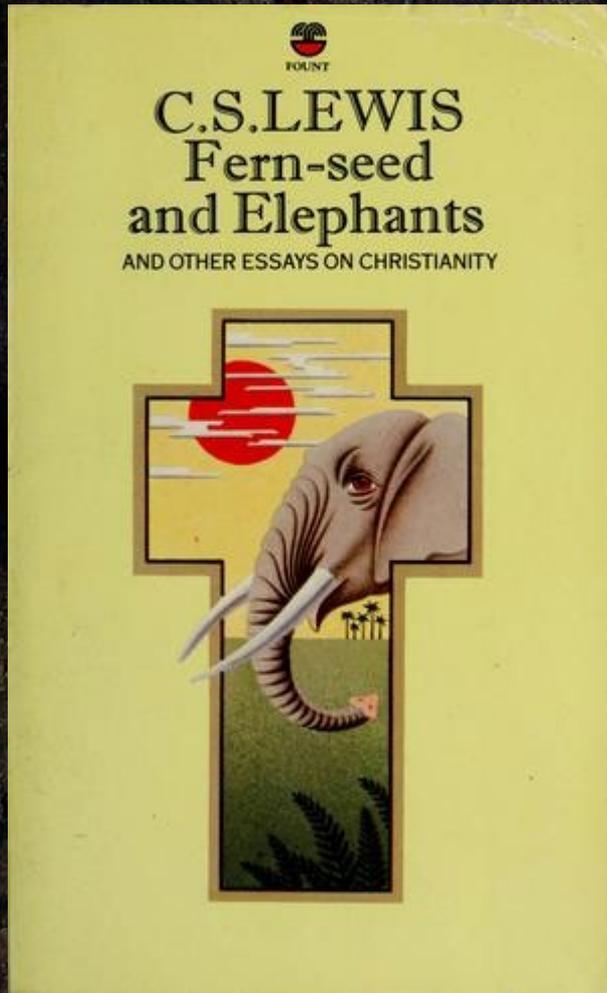


## *C.S Lewis' Fern-Seed and Elephants*

These men ask me to believe they can read between the lines of the old texts; the evidence is their obvious inability to read (in any sense worth discussing) the lines themselves...

# How to Interpret the Bible

*The danger of reading between the lines*



*C.S Lewis' Fern-Seed and Elephants*

...They claim to see fern-seed and can't see an elephant ten yards away in broad daylight.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## How Not to Interpret the Bible



In Frank Turek's podcast, *There are No Verses in the Bible*, he starts with asking how you would interpret a sentence from the newspaper, "After the strike, the team will celebrate."

Is this talking about fishing, baseball, bowling, union, marksmen? What does that mean? You need context. There are very few independently standing verses in the Bible.

Also google Greg Koukl, *Never Read a Bible Verse*.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## How Not to Interpret the Bible



A biblical passage can't mean now what it didn't mean then. You can't pour your own meaning into it.

You are wanting to read *God's* word, not *your own* word. Exegesis is getting the meaning out of the text. Eisegesis is reading your meaning into the text.

You can't apply a passage properly to yourself until you know what it means.  
(Exegesis must come before application)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## How Not to Interpret the Bible



Frank Turek, PhD.  
Christian Apologist

1. Don't read one verse and ignore the context

2. Don't always point the compass to yourself

If you were lost in the woods, how helpful would your magnetic compass be if instead of it pointing north, it always pointed toward yourself? Don't make a passage about you unless it applies to you.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## How Not to Interpret the Bible



Frank Turek, PhD.  
Christian Apologist

For example, Jeremiah 29:11 is the text of a letter that Jeremiah wrote to the Jerusalem elders exiled to Babylon.

*“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## How Not to Interpret the Bible



Frank Turek, PhD.  
Christian Apologist

Why not claim Jeremiah 44:11 to those exiled to Egypt?

*“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will set My face against you for catastrophe and for cutting off all Judah.”*

# How to Interpret the Bible



**For I know the plans I have for you...  
(if you were ever captive in ancient Babylon)**

# How to Interpret the Bible



# How to Interpret the Bible



# How to Interpret the Bible

## Practices to follow

In Frank Turek's latest book, *Stealing from God*, he suggests using the acronym S.T.O.P. to discover the meaning of any given biblical text. It is as follows:

**S-Situation?** What's the historical situation? What do you need to know about the people and events in the story? What's the larger context?

**T-Type?** What's the type of literature? Is it historical narrative? Poetry? Prophecy? Law? Wisdom? Epistle? What literary devices are being used: Hyperbole? Parable? Metaphor? Apocalyptic Imagery?

**O-Object?** Who is the object of the text? Everyone? Specific people? Ancient Israel? Is it the Old or New Covenant?

**P-Prescription?** Is this passage prescriptive for us today or merely descriptive of an historical event?

# How to Interpret the Bible

Travis Echols

## Lesson 6. Inerrancy Debate and Case Studies



# How to Interpret the Bible

## Six-week course outline

1. Introduction, History of Interpretation, and the Bible as God's Word (pages 1-12)\*
2. Textual Criticism and Bible Translations (13-28)\*
3. Five Principles of Interpretation (pages 29-34)\*
4. Genre and Language (35-57)
5. Eight Interpretation Fallacies and Bible Difficulties (pages 57-65)\*
6.  Inerrancy Debate and Case Studies (pages 78-91)\*

*\*Reading to Grow by Bernard James Mauser*

# **The Bible as God's Word**

**Inerrancy (truthful in all it affirms) flows from inspiration**

**All scripture is given by inspiration of God  
God does not inspire error  
Therefore the scriptures are inerrant**

**God cannot err  
The Bible is God's word  
Therefore the Bible cannot err**

**Other pieces of literature can be inerrant, but  
scripture is necessarily inerrant by virtue of the fact  
that all scripture is inspired by God**

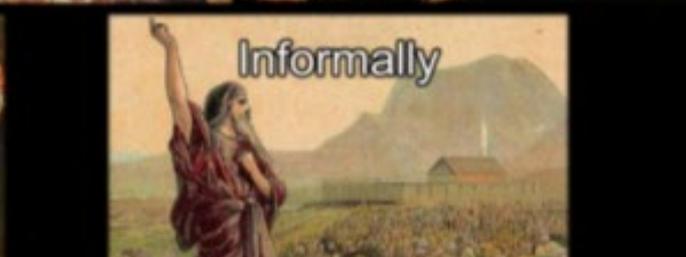
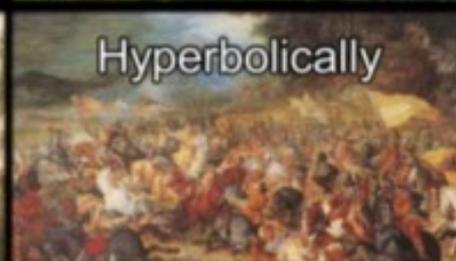
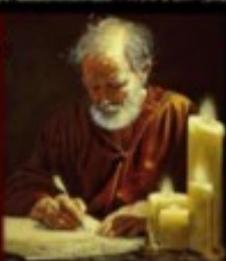
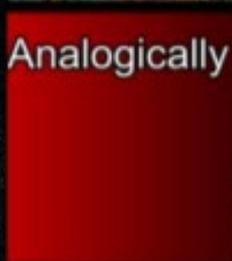
# The Bible as God's Word

## My approach of reconciling full inerrancy with “apparent contradictions”

1. Abstract approach of B.B. Warfield. Difficulties need not be explained due to the weight of evidence for inerrancy
2. Harmonistic approach of Edward Irving and Louis Gaussen. Difficulties can be harmonized with existing data we have.
-  3. **Moderate harmonization approach of Everett Harrison. Serious approach to harmonize as many as possible with available data--with others remaining unresolved until more data is obtained**
4. Reproduction approach suggested by Edward Carnell. The Bible writers reproduce erroneous information from other sources

# How to Interpret the Bible

Ways a Proposition Can Correspond to Reality (i.e., be true)



# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Mary, mother of the Church?



Did Jesus make Mary the mother of humanity or the church by this statement?

*When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. (Jn 19:26-27)*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Mary, mother of the Church?



Aman Daniel

New Member · February 10 at 3:48 PM · 🌐



The intercession of the Holy Virgin Mary is necessary for our salvation.

😄👍❤️ 79

610 Comments

👍 Like

[View previous comments](#)

[Most Recent](#) ▼

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Mary, mother of the Church?



The immediate context and the “absence of evidence where it would be expected” in Acts and the Epistles makes it clear that the apostles did not interpret Jesus’ words to elevate Mary in this way.

John simply was to take care of Mary as his mother and Mary to treat John as her son.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Mary, mother of the Church?



### Hermeneutical Principles Applied

1. Using immediate and broader context to derive the meaning of the statement
2. Rightly acknowledging the authority of scripture above human tradition (Mk 7:13). Being like the Bereans who search the scriptures to know truth (Acts 17:10)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Hebrews 6:4 “Have tasted”

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. (Heb 6:4-6)*

**Does “have tasted” mean to sample or nibble without fully experiencing these spiritual blessings? Or does “have tasted” mean to fully experience these blessings? Are these enlightened people believers or not?**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Hebrews 6:4 “Have tasted”

Hebrews 6:4 ▾

4 Ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοὺς	ἅπαξ	φωτισθέντας,				
impossible	For	-	for those who were once	enlightened		
g0102	g1063	g3588	g0530	g5461		
γευμαίμενους	τε	τῆς δωρεᾶς	τῆς ἐπουρανίου,	καὶ		
have tasted	and	-	gift	-	of the heavenly	and
g1089	g5037	g3588	g1431	g3588	g2032	g2532
μετόχους γεννηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου,						
partakers	were made	Ghost	of the Holy			
g3353	g1096	g4151	g0040			

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Hebrews 6:4 “Have tasted”

Hebrews 6:5 ▾

5 καὶ καλὸν γευσάμενους θεοῦ ῥῆμα, δυνάμεις τε  
And the good have tasted of God word the powers and  
g2532 g2570 g1089 g2316 g4487 g1411 g5037

μέλλοντος αἰῶνος,  
to come of the world  
g3195 g0165

And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Hebrews 6:4 “Have tasted”

Olive Tree Enhanced Strong's Dictionary

A\*

**g1089.** γεύομαι *geuomai*; a primary verb; to taste; by implication, to eat; figuratively, to experience (good or ill):  
– eat, taste.

AV (15) - taste 12, eat 3;

I. to taste, to try the flavour of

II. to taste

A. i.e. perceive the flavour of, partake of, enjoy

B. to feel, make trial of, experience

III. to take food, eat, to take nourishment, eat

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Hebrews 6:4 “Have tasted”

Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary o...



γεύομαι ▾

[1174] γεύομαι *geuomai* 15x *to taste*, Mt. 27:34; Jn. 2:9; absol. *to take food*, Acts 10:10, et al.; met. *to have perception of, experience*, Heb. 6:4, 5; 1 Pet. 2:3; θανάτου γεύεσθαι, *to experience death, to die*, Mt. 16:28, et al. [1089] See *eat; partake; taste*.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Hebrews 6:4 “Have tasted”

#### TASTE

#### New Testament

Verb: γεύομαι (geuomai), GK 1174 (S 1089), 15x. geuomai means “to taste, eat, partake of,” usually implying enjoyment of the experience. This verb is used in a literal sense in Mt. 27:34; Lk. 14:24; Jn. 2:9; Acts 10:10; 20,11; 23,14; Col. 2:21. The literal sense of geuomai symbolizes partaking in the kingdom of God in the parable of the banquet (Lk. 14:24).

geuomai is also used figuratively. In Heb. 2:9 it refers to Christ’s tasting of death on the cross, through which he partook of death for everyone who believes in him. Jesus also refers to the disciples’ not tasting death until they see the kingdom of God (Mt. 16:28; Mk. 9:1; Lk. 9:27; Jn. 8:52). One of the most problematic uses of this verb occurs in Heb. 6:4-5, where the author speaks of the impossibility to renew to repentance those who have “tasted the heavenly gift” and “tasted the goodness of the word of God” (see also impossible). Scholars debate as to whether this means such individuals were ever really saved. While this issue may not be definitively settled, it is certain that such people were thoroughly integrated into the Christian community. Finally, in 1 Pet. 2:3, Peter insists that those who have “tasted that the Lord is good” (cf. Ps. 34:8) should grow in their knowledge of salvation and God’s Word—a reminder to all of us that we may never become stagnant in our faith. See NIDNTT-A, 105-6.\*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Hebrews 6:4 “Have tasted”

KJV Greek-English Interlinear New Testament - Text



1 Peter 2:2 ▾

*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*

3 εἴπερ ἐγεύσασθε ὅτι χρηστός ὁ κύριος·

If so be ye have tasted that gracious - the Lord

g1512

g1089

g3754

g5543

g3588

g2962

*If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Hebrews 6:4 “Have tasted”

KJV Greek-English Interlinear New Testament - Text

A\*

Matthew 16:28 ▾

28 Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, εἰσὶν τινες ὧδε ἐστῶτες, οἵτινες

Verily I say unto you There be some here standing which  
g0281 g3004 g5213 g1526 g5100 g5602 g2476 g3748

οὐ μὴ γεύσονται θανάτου, ἕως ἂν ἴδωσιν τὸν  
(shall not) shall not taste of death till (till) they see -  
g3756 g3361 g1089 g2288 g2193 g0302 g1492 g3588

υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ αὐτοῦ.

the Son - of man coming in - kingdom his  
g5207 g3588 g0444 g2064 g1722 g3588 g0932 g0846

*Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Hebrews 6:4 “Have tasted”

#### ▲ Colossians

2:21 <sup>21</sup> Μη το γ3361 ἅψη, (Touch g0680 μη δὲ not g3366 γεύση, taste g1089 μη δὲ not g3366 θίγησ handle g2345 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

#### ▲ Hebrews

2:9 <sup>9</sup> Τὸν-g3588 δὲ But g1161 βραχὺα little lower g1024 τι--g5100 παρ' than g3844 ἀγγέλους the angels g0032 ἠλαττωμένον who was made g1642 βλέπομεν we see g0991  
2:9 Ἰησοῦν, Jesus g2424 διὰ for g1223 τὸ-g3588 πάθημα the suffering g3804 τοῦ-g3588 θανάτου of death g2288 δόξῃ with glory g1391 καὶ and g2532 τιμῆς honour g5092  
ἔστεφανωμένον, crowned g4737 ὅπως that g3704 χάριτι by the grace g5485 θεοῦ of God g2316 ὑπὲρ for g5228 παντὸς every man g3956 γεύσῃται he g1089 θανάτου. death g2288 But we

6:4 <sup>4</sup> Ἀδύνατον impossible g0102 γὰρ For g1063 τοὺς-g3588 ἅπασι for those who were once g0530 φωτισθέντας, enlightened g5461 γεύσαμένους have tasted g1089 τε and g5037 τῆς-g3588 δωρεᾶς gift g1431 τῆς-g3588 ἐπουρανίου, of the heavenly g2032 καὶ and g2532 μετόχους partakers g3353 γενηθέντας were made g1096 πνεύματος Ghost g4151 ἁγίου, of the Holy g0040 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

6:5 <sup>5</sup> καὶ And g2532 καλὸν the good g2570 γεύσαμένους have tasted g1089 θεοῦ of God g2316 ῥήμα, word g4487 δυνάμεις the powers g1411 τε and g5037 μέλλοντος to come g3195 αἰῶνος, of the world g0165 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

#### ▲ 1 Peter

2:3 <sup>3</sup> εἴτε If so be g1512 ἐγεύσασθε eye have tasted g1089 ὅτι that g3754 χρηστός gracious g5543 ὁ-g3588 κύριος the Lord g2962 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

γεύω used 15 times but only 3 times in Hebrews

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Hebrews 6:4 “Have tasted”

The only other place in Hebrews where tasted (γεύω) is used is Hebrews 2:9 in which Jesus should “taste death” for every man.

Jesus didn't sample or nibble on death; he fully experienced it.

This meaning for tasted, assuming the context of Hebrews 6 does not suggest otherwise, would therefore be the more likely meaning for Hebrews 6 as well.

KJV Greek-English Interlinear New Testament - T...

A\*

Hebrews 2:9 ▾

9	Τὸν	δὲ	βραχύ	τι	παρ'	ἀγγέλους
-	But	a little	lower	--	than	the angels
g3588	g1161	g1024	g5100	g3844	g0032	

ἠλαττωμένον	βλέπομεν	Ἰησοῦν,	διὰ	τὸ
who was made	we see	Jesus	for	-
g1642	g0991	g2424	g1223	g3588

πάθημα	τοῦ	θανάτου	δόξῃ	καὶ	τιμῇ
the suffering	-	of death	with glory	and	honour
g3804	g3588	g2288	g1391	g2532	g5092

ἔστεφανωμένον,	ὅπως	χάριτι	θεοῦ	ὑπὲρ
crowned	that	by the grace	of God	for
g4737	g3704	g5485	g2316	g5228

παντὸς	γεύσεται	θανάτου.
every man	he	death
g3956	g1089	g2288

*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Hebrews 6:4 “Have tasted”

#### Hermeneutic Principles Applied

1. Define a word as it is typically used by the same Bible writer unless immediate context suggests otherwise
2. Don't allow a theological doctrine to limit or distort the meaning of a word (do biblical theology before systematic theology; exegesis before harmonization)
3. Recognizing synonymous parallelism in the passage (the “piling on” of similar terms to clarify the meaning)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Refuting covenantal infant baptism interpretation



Noting the similarities between physical circumcision and baptism and yet ignoring the dissimilarities can create a false parallelism of the two rituals, revealing a faulty hermeneutic.

This supposed one-to-one correspondence is invalidated by observing the great differences between Old Covenant circumcision and New Covenant baptism.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Refuting covenantal infant baptism interpretation



**Under the Abrahamic Covenant, all male descendants of Abraham, as well as servants, both adults and children, whether believing or not, whether from believing parents or not, were to receive the bloody ritual of foreskin removal (Gen 17:1-14, 20, 25-26).**

**Applying water to male and female infants of only believing parents is not consistent with either the Old or New Covenants.**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Refuting covenantal infant baptism interpretation



### Hermeneutic Principles Applied

1. Weigh appropriately all similarities and differences in comparisons
2. Understand OT and NT specifics within their broader covenantal context
3. Resist theological systems (e.g., covenant of grace) that take priority over the above biblical factors

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Example: Context and the Baptism of Fire

Matt 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (John the Baptist foretelling of Jesus)

Acts 2:1-4 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit\* and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Divided tongues as of fire appeared at the Spirit's coming)

**Interpretation 1: The apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire**

Note: Acts 1:5 with 10:47 and 11:15-16 suggest this was the fulfillment of the baptism with the Holy Spirit (either interchangeable or simultaneous with filling)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Example: Context and the Baptism of Fire

### A closer look

Mk 1:8 And he preached, saying, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” (no mention of fire in John’s prophecy per Mark)

Acts 1:5 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (no mention of fire by Jesus)

Acts 11:15-16 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ (no mention of fire in Peter’s recounting of the Gentile’s experience that was like their’s at the beginning)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Example: Context and the Baptism of Fire

### A closer look (cont'd)

Matt 3:10-12 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.* His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (context of verse 11 suggests fire is judgment from verse 10 and 12 and explains no mention of fire where judgment is not in mind)

Interpretation 2 (best): Jesus baptized the apostles with the Holy Spirit and will baptize unbelievers with fire

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Example: Context and the Baptism of Fire

### Hermeneutic Principles Applied

1. Use immediate context to get the sense of the word
2. Examine all other passages that speak to the same subject

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Jesus: Human and/or Divine

### Jesus is human



**Luke 2:52**

**And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.**

**Mark 13:32**

**But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**

**Matthew 4:2**

**And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.**

**John 19:30**

**When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Jesus: Human and/or Divine

### Jesus is God



**John 1:1**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**John 8:58**

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

**Titus 2:13**

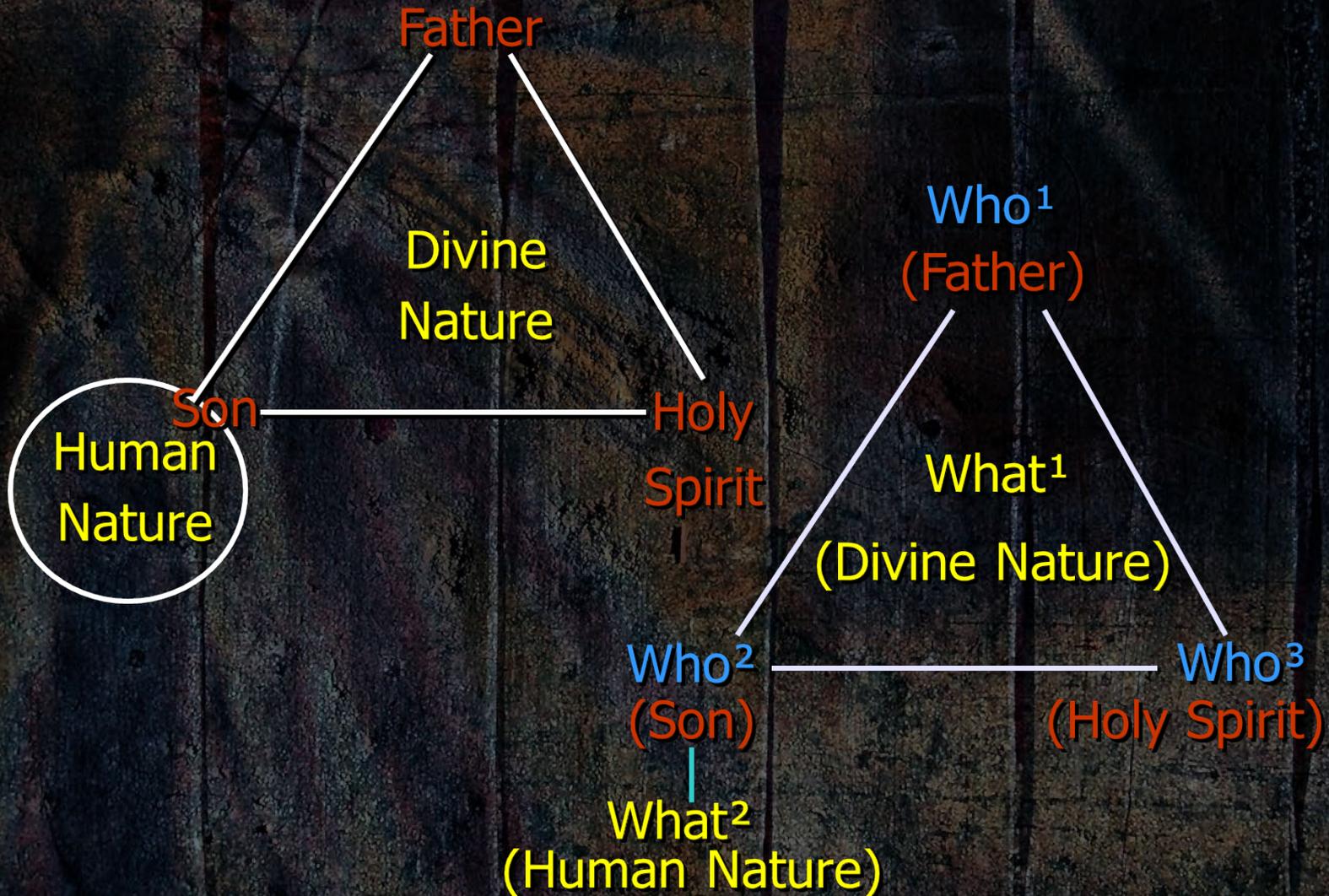
Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Hebrews 1:8**

But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

# How to Interpret the Bible

Jesus is God and Human



# How to Interpret the Bible

## Jesus: Human and/or Divine

### Hermeneutic Principles Applied

1. Examine all passages that speak to the subject
2. Use careful logic to harmonize the various scriptures

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Continuation and End of the Mosaic Law



How does the Old Covenant Mosaic Law apply to New Covenant believers?

The Old Testament scriptures were written for our learning and admonition that through the examples of the ancients we might be warned and have hope, patience, and comfort (Romans 15:4, 1Cor 10:11). All the laws of God reflect the holy nature of God. And certain behavior, though not explicitly prohibited in scripture, is prohibited by principle, conscience sake, or love for others. The question asked here is how the Old Covenant laws God gave through Moses at Mount Sinai to the children of Israel apply to Christians today.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Continuation and End of the Mosaic Law



There are verses in the Old Testament that convey the enduring nature of the Mosaic Covenant (Ex 40:15; Lev 24:8; Num 25:13). Albeit many of God's promises were conditional upon his covenant people's faithfulness (Ex 19:5-6; Num 14:30-34; Deut 28:13-25, 45-46, 68; Jer 18:9-10; 1Sam 2:30). But there was also anticipation expressed of God's judgment and subsequent new-covenant relationship with Israel (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 11:19-20; 36:24-28). In the New Testament, there are verses that suggest the Mosaic Law is still binding during the New Covenant era (Matt 5:18-19; Rom 3:31; 7:12; 13:8-10; James 1:25; 1Tim 1:8).

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Continuation and End of the Mosaic Law



However, there are also many verses that suggest the Old Covenant Mosaic Law has been fulfilled and abolished (Matt 5:17; 11:13; Acts 15:5,19, 24, 28; 21:24-25; Rom 6:14; 7:4; Rom 10:4; 14:5-6; 2Cor 3:7-13; Gal 3:2-3; 3:19-26; 4:9-11; Eph 2:15; Col 2:13-17; Heb 7:11-12,18; 8:13; 10:9).

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Continuation and End of the Mosaic Law



The Mosaic Law continues in the better New Covenant sense. The Mosaic Law is abolished in the inferior Old Covenant sense.

This is congruent with God's advancing kingdom program from glory to greater glory.

Thus, the commands issued to God's New Covenant people in the New Testament constitute law as a guide (rule of life), motivated by love and empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Continuation and End of the Mosaic Law



The spirit of the Mosaic Law abides in all its details, being perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ and codified in the New Covenant commands issued by Jesus and the Apostles to the New Covenant church.

As a caterpillar continues in a new and superior form of a butterfly, so does the Old Covenant Law continue in the new and superior form of the commandments of Jesus and the Apostles under the New Covenant.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## The Continuation and End of the Mosaic Law

### Hermeneutic Principles Applied

1. Examine all passages that speak to the subject
2. Use careful logic to harmonize the various scriptures and truths gleaned from them
3. Use a consistent hermeneutical method (avoiding arbitrarily cherry-picking OT commands to apply to New Covenant believers)

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Rejecting compatibilistic free will



### Broad Motifs Speaking to God's Sovereignty

1. God is the Creator, Possessor, and Ruler of all things
2. God is the ultimate personal Cause of everything that happens
3. God elects His people
4. God is the unacknowledged source of good fortune or success

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Rejecting compatibilistic free will

#### Broad Motifs Speaking to Man's Freedom & Responsibility

1. People face a multitude of divine exhortations and commands
2. People are said to obey, believe, and choose God
3. People often sin and rebel against God
4. People's sins are judged by God
5. People are tested by God
6. People receive divine rewards
7. The elect are responsible to respond to God's gracious initiatives
8. Prayers are not dictations or mere show-pieces
9. God pleads with sinners to repent and be saved



# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Rejecting compatibilistic free will



Compatibilism says we are not free to do other than what we do, since God causally determines what we do. Our free will is compatible with God's sovereignty only in the sense that we voluntarily choose according with, not against, our nature/desire.

Since God causally determines all that comes to pass (per compatibilism) including what we desire, there is no meaningful free will. The fact that we sense we could do otherwise (and live as such) is an illusion.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Rejecting compatibilistic free will



However, if we question the presupposition of “causal determinism” that we bring to the text, other possible avenues of harmonization may open up to us without destroying either libertarian free will or God’s sovereignty

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Rejecting compatibilistic free will



For example,

Molinism-God ordains all that comes to pass in meticulous detail by setting in motion what He knew would occur, placing us in those circumstances, and by permitting our free choices that He could prevent.

Thomism-God ordains and determines all that comes to pass in meticulous detail by His simultaneous enabling of the human will to move itself in virtue of His first motion.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Rejecting compatibilistic free will

#### Hermeneutic Principles Applied

1. Examine and weight appropriately all passages that speak to the subject
2. Use careful logic to harmonize the various scriptures
3. Resist compromising one truth for the sake of harmony with another truth
4. Retrace and find your misstep if your conclusion leads to a contradiction or absurdity, or if it dishonors God and His truth. Only hold in tension two seemingly opposing truths in bewilderment as a last resort.



# How to Interpret the Bible

## Examples of good hermeneutics

### Rejecting compatibilistic free will



### Hermeneutic Principles Applied (cont'd)

5. Evaluate all your preunderstandings that influence the way you are interpreting the texts
6. Consider all possible philosophical preunderstanding/ presuppositions that could shed light on the topic
7. Lean toward the preunderstanding that best harmonizes the various scriptures and does the least violence to the them (and you can live with the logical ends and the persisting mysteries of that position).

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Reasons we may disagree on interpretation (from scripture)

- A. Some things God has not revealed
- B. There is nothing wrong with the Bible
- C. The problem is with us

1. No indwelling Holy Spirit.
2. Sinfulness.
3. Not enough diligent study.
4. Too much independence.
5. Too much dependence on others.
6. Not seeking the truth.
7. Fear of controversy.
8. Pride.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Reasons we may disagree on interpretation (from scripture)

### D. We all need to continually grow in our understanding

Wayne Grudem gives the following qualifications for understanding scripture:

1. Scripture affirms that it is able to be understood but not all at once.
2. Scripture affirms that it is able to be understood but not without effort.
3. Scripture affirms that it is able to be understood but not without ordinary means.
4. Scripture affirms that it is able to be understood but not without the reader's willingness to obey it.
5. Scripture affirms that it is able to be understood but not without the help of the Holy Spirit.
6. Scripture affirms that it is able to be understood but not without human understanding.
7. Scripture affirms that it is able to be understood but never completely.

# How to Interpret the Bible

## Summary

The text of the Bible communicates objective truth that can be understood. Some parts are difficult to understand, but not impossible. Continued growth in understanding comes through praise, prayer, humility, study, and obedience. Also, since God used human writers to pen his word in human language to communicate to human beings, valid principles of human language interpretation and application should always be observed.

# How to Interpret the Bible

Travis Echols

