

Bible Study Basics Class or

“How to read your bible without becoming a heretic” Outline

Topic 1 Introduction to Hermeneutics

Answer Key questions What is it? Where did it come from? Why do we need it

- What is it?

- *“The science that teaches the principles, laws and methods of interpretation” Louis Berkhoff*
- *“HERMENEUTICS is the science and art of Biblical interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation.” Bernard Ramm*
- *Hermeneutics explores the conditions and criteria that operate to try to ensure responsible, valid, fruitful, or appropriate interpretation. Anthony Thiselton*

- Why do we need it?

- Sinful Darkened Mind of Humanity
 - Diversity of pattern and approach in thought
 - Preparation for gospel ministry
-

Topic 2 An introduction to the Bible

• What is it?

1. Terminology

a. Inspiration

- i. Texts: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21
- ii. Belgic Confession Article 3 & 4

Article 3: The Written Word of God

We confess that this Word of God was not sent nor delivered “by human will,” but that “men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God,” as Peter says.¹ Afterward our God— with special care for us and our salvation— commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit this revealed Word to writing. God, with his own finger, wrote the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures. (2 Pet. 1:21)

iii. The supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the writers of Scripture so that their writings became an accurate record of God's revelation with the result they were writing the very Word of God

“The Spirit of the Lord entered into the prophets and apostles themselves and so employed and led them that they themselves examined and reflected, spoke and wrote as they did. It is God who speaks through them; at the same time, it is they themselves who speak and write.” - H. Bavinck

b. Infallibility – Scripture cannot err; it is incapable of making a mistake or being in error

c. Inerrancy – Scripture does not err; Scripture in the original manuscripts are the Word of God written and are without error in all that they teach. [Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; 17:17]

d. Canon – The sixty-six books together function as the supreme measuring rod or authority for the church

Article 4: The Canonical Books

We include in the Holy Scripture the two volumes of the Old and New Testaments.

They are canonical books with which there can be no quarrel at all.

In the church of God the list is as follows:

In the Old Testament,

the five books of Moses—

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy;

the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth;

the two books of Samuel, and two of Kings;

the two books of Chronicles, called Paralipomenon;

the first book of Ezra; Nehemiah, Esther, Job;

the Psalms of David;

the three books of Solomon—

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song;

the four major prophets—

Isaiah, Jeremiah*, Ezekiel, Daniel; and then the other twelve minor prophets—

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah,

Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk,

Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

In the New Testament,

the four gospels—

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John;

the Acts of the Apostles;

the fourteen letters of Paul—

to the Romans;

the two letters to the Corinthians;

to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians;

the two letters to the Thessalonians;

the two letters to Timothy;

to Titus, Philemon, and to the Hebrews;

the seven letters of the other apostles—
one of James;
two of Peter;
three of John;
one of Jude;
and the Revelation of the apostle John.

* “Jeremiah” here includes the Book of Lamentations as well as the Book of Jeremiah.

Attributes of Scripture

- a. **Authority** – The last word always goes to the Word of God. Teachings of science, human experience, or even church councils cannot take precedence over Scripture.
- b. **Necessity** – General revelation is not enough to save us. We cannot know God savingly by means of personal experience and human reason. We need God’s Word to tell us how to live, to reveal who Christ is, and how we are to be saved.
- c. **Clarity** The saving message of Jesus Christ is plainly taught in the Scriptures and can be understood by all who have ears to hear it. We don’t need official church leaders to tell us what the Bible means (but they can help)!

Westminster Confession of Faith 1.7 –

“All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.”

- d. **Sufficiency** The Scriptures contain everything we need for knowledge of salvation and godly living. We don’t need any new revelation from heaven.

Four practical applications -

- 1. It helps us keep tradition in its place
- 2. Should keep us from adding to or subtracting from the word of God
- 3. We should expect the word of God to be relevant to all of life
- 4. As we read our Bibles we “hear” God’s “voice”

1. Translations

Bible originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic for the OT and Greek for the NT

Main translation philosophies

- i. Formal equivalence (word-for-word approach)
- ii. Dynamic equivalence (phrase-for-phrase approach)
- iii. Paraphrase (Thought-for-Thought / general interpretation)

Topic 3 The Bible is a Book, Two Books, and a Library.

The Bible is A Book, Two Books, and a Library - Ligon Duncan

1. The Bible is a Book:

At the highest level, Scripture is one unified story.

It has one ultimate Author — God (2 Tim. 3:16)

It has one central message — the gospel of Jesus Christ (Luke 24:27)

It has one coherent storyline — creation → fall → redemption → consummation

This guards us from reading the Bible as disconnected moral lessons or inspirational fragments. Instead, every passage finds its place in the unfolding drama of redemption, culminating in Christ.

Pastoral implication:

You preach every text as part of one story, not many unrelated ones. The question is always:

How does this text fit into God's redemptive plan fulfilled in Christ?

2. The Bible is Two Books:

Scripture is divided into the Old Testament and New Testament, and that division matters.

Old Testament

Promise

Preparation

Shadows and types

Anticipation of the Messiah

New Testament

Fulfillment

Realization in Christ

Explanation of His work

Application to the church

This distinction protects us from flattening Scripture. The Old Testament is not merely “background,” and the New Testament is not disconnected from it—they are organically related.

The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed.

Pastoral implication:

You honor progressive revelation

You read the Old Testament forward to Christ

You read the New Testament back through the promises of the Old

3. The Bible is a Library

The Bible is also a collection of 66 distinct books, written:

By multiple human authors

Across ~1,500 years

In different genres:

Narrative

Law

Poetry/Wisdom

Prophecy

Gospels

Epistles

Apocalyptic

Each book has its own:

Historical context

Literary style

Immediate purpose

This guards us from careless interpretation. You don't read Psalms the same way you read Romans, or Proverbs the same way as Revelation.

Pastoral implication:

You practice careful exegesis

You respect genre and context

You avoid forcing meanings onto texts