

וַיִּקְרָא וְכֵן יִקְרָאוּ עוֹד׃

9 וְרֵאיוֹתָ אֶת-אֲדָמִי נֹכַח עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיֹּאמֶר׃ הֲדֵי מִכְפָּרוֹר וַיִּרְעֵשׂוּ הַסִּפִּים

10 וַיִּבְצְעֵם בְּרֵאשִׁי׃ כָּלֵם וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם בַּחֲרָב אֲחֵרִי׃
 לֹא-יָנוּס לָהֶם נֹס וְלֹא-יִמְלֹט לָהֶם פְּלִיט׃

11 אִם-יִחַתְרוּ בַשָּׂדֶה מִשָּׂם יָדֵי תַקְהָם
 וְאִם-יַעֲלוּ הַשָּׂמִים מִשָּׂם אוֹרֵיהֶם׃

12 וְאִם-יִחַבְּאוּ בְרֵאשֵׁי הַכֶּרְמֶל מִשָּׂם אֲחַפְשֵׁי וְלִקְחֹתֵים [וַיִּשְׁקֶם׃
 וְאִם-יִסְתְּרוּ מִיַּגְד עֵינָי׃ בְּקִרְקַע הַיָּם מִשָּׂם אֲצִנָּה אֶת-הַנֶּחֱשׁ׃

13 וְאִם-יִלְכוּ בַשָּׂבִיל לִפְנֵי אֵי בֵיחֵים׃ מִשָּׂם אֲצִנָּה אֶת-הַחֲרָב
 וְשִׁמְתִי עֵינֵי עַל-יָהֶם לְרַעַה וְלֹא לְשׂוֹבָה׃ [וְהִרְגַתֶם]

14 וַיֹּאדָמֵי יְהוָה הַצְּבָאוֹת׃

15 הַנּוֹגֵעַ בְּאֶרֶץ וְתִמּוֹן׃ וְאֲבָלוּ כָל-יּוֹשְׁבֵי בְדֵי וְעַלְתָּה כִּיֹּאד כְּלָה וְשִׁקְעָה כִּיֹּאד מִצְרָיִם׃

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17 הֲלֹא כִבְנֵי כְשִׂיִם אַתֶּם לִי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל׃ נְאֻם-יְהוָה הֲלֹא אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵעֲלִיתִי מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם וּפְלִשְׁתִּיִם מִכְפָּרוֹר וְאַתֶּם מִקְרָר׃

18 הֲיָה עֵינֵי אֲדָמִי יְהוָה׃ בַּמְּלֶכֶת הַחֲשָׂא



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Hermen-who?

*Hermeneutics — Exploring the tools, rules, and practices of
 Biblical interpretation — from a historical perspective.
 February 7, 2021*

Questions for the class

- ❖ Is the following passage of scripture authoritative? (ie - it directs us in a pathway of faithful discipleship)
- ❖ “John 13:34 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”
Why or why not is that authoritative?
How about the following?
- ❖ “Rom. 13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”
Why or why not is that authoritative?

Questions for the class

How about this?

“Ex. 21:17 Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death.”

Why or why not is that authoritative?

How about this?

“Acts 2:43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44 All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

Why or why not is that authoritative?

Questions for the class

When we say that the Bible is “inspired? what do we mean?

Who was/is inspired? *locus*

When does inspiration take place? *tempus*

Can we *prove* inspiration?

How would we go about doing that?

וַיִּקְרָא וְלֹא יִקְרֹמוּ עוֹד׃

9 וְרֵאיוֹתָי אֶת־אֲדָרְיָ וְנָצַב עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיֹּאמֶר׃ הֲדַיִּי הַכִּפְתּוֹר וַיִּרְעֶשׂוּ הַסְּפִיּוֹת׃

10 וַיִּבְצְעֵם׃ בְּרֵאשׁוֹ׃ כָּלֶם וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם בַּחֲרֵב אֲחֵרֵי׃
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 וְאִם־יִסְתְּרוּ׃ מִיַּגְד עֵינָי׃ בְּקִרְקַע הַיָּם מִשָּׁם׃ אֲצַנְחָה אֶת־הַנְּחֹשׁ׃

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Hermen-who?

Hermeneutics I — Introduction to the Question of Interpretive Practices
 February 7, 2021

Introduction to Hermeneutics

- ◆ From Greek word *hermeneus* which means “translator” or “interpreter.”
- ◆ In Greek mythology the first *hermeneut* is Hermes (see the connection of his name to the word-stem?). Hermes was the messenger who communicated the mysterious messages and truths of the gods across the metaphysical chasm to humans. Hermeneutics is the study of the question, “How do we interpret or translate meaning - across, for example, the chasm of language, culture, and time?” Hermes is remembered as a trickster.

Important Vocabulary - Epistemology

- ◆ From Greek word *episteme* which means “truth” or “knowledge.”
 - ◆ In ancient philosophy “truth” and “knowledge” are *absolutely distinct* from “beliefs” and “opinions.”
 - ◆ Truth and knowledge pertain to those things *about which we could not possibly be wrong*.
 - ◆ Beliefs and opinions are *always probable* - not certain.

Important Vocabulary - Epistemology

- ◆ From Greek word *episteme* which means “truth” or “knowledge.”
 - ◆ In ancient philosophy “truth” and “knowledge” are things which pass a four-fold test:
 - ◆ **Timeless** — Always has been and will always be this way.
 - ◆ **Universal** — Is true everywhere.
 - ◆ **Necessary** — It *must* be as it is (no other possible explanation).
 - ◆ **Certain** — no probability. This is something about which we could not be wrong.

Important Vocabulary - Epistemology

- ◆ So why this emphasis on defining Platonic philosophy and the meaning of epistemology?
 - ◆ Because Plato's view has dominated the Western philosophical tradition even though attempts to arrive at truth or knowledge defined this way are, thus far, logically indefensible. [affirming the antecedent]
 - ◆ We do not have access to unique descriptions of reality which correspond to the four-fold test — and, in fact, *never* have had access to them. It becomes a circular logic because all our data comes via *experience* which is, by definition, particular (i.e. not unique).
 - ◆ Because modern Christians have a habit of viewing the truths of the bible as if they met Plato's tests....

The Logical Fallacy of Affirming the Antecedent

- ◆ All the way back to Aristotle's teaching on logical deductive reasoning it has been understood that the following is a logical fallacy:
 - ◆ "If my theory is correct, then X will turn blue." (followed by observation)
 - ◆ "X turns blue — *therefore my theory is correct!*"
 - ◆ But Ah! It's not *necessarily correct* - there could be a hundred *other reasons* why X turned blue.
 - ◆ And yet, following Plato's epistemology, the Western philosophical / scientific traditions have consistently used exactly this kind of reasoning.

How this connects to Biblical Hermeneutics

- ◆ We have absorbed a way of thinking about truth which is deeply influenced by our own particular place in time and tradition.
- ◆ Because, in the West, people have imagined that they actually could have access to TRUTH that was Timeless, Necessary, Universal, and Certain — they have claimed this standard for all manner of things they perceived to be TRUE (the Bible for example) even though it is not possible to have TRUTH of this kind.
- ◆ Plato said that when we have a Truth which is timeless, necessary, universal, and certain — *we know Truth as God knows it.*

But these Greek notions of truth have not always held sway . . .

- ◆ Indeed, the Hebrew scripture that Jesus used was predicated on an entirely different notion of its truth and Jesus would have found the Greek notions of Plato to be a strange way of addressing the question of the search for what was True.
- ◆ Hebrew scripture (and still the Jewish tradition) understands the “Word of God” as an endlessly evolving *conversation*. Even after the text is committed to writing, they never conclude that the written text is the final “Word.” In fact, the written text simply serves as a way of defining the “playing field” of the conversation of faithful people.

Faith & Suspicion:
Texts & Readers

Ideas about “text.”

- ◆ The idea that there is *a* text is a fairly modern idea.
- ◆ Prior to 1439 and Johannes Gutenberg’s introduction of moveable type and the modern printing press to Europe - it was inconceivable to people that books should be alike.
- ◆ The vagaries of hand-copied texts were well-understood and appreciated by all and no one thought of the Bible they were holding in their hand as *the* text. They recognized that it was *a version* of the text.

Handwritten Books

In the Ancient world there was no [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

- ✿ Reproduction not by printing press.
- ✿ No mass-production with all copies identical.
- ✿ There *were* strategies employed to *try* to avoid serious flaws, but there was no way to assure uniformity.
- ✿ For example they might count the number of words on a page in both the original and then the copy.
- ✿ Dated by Paleography. (*palaiós* + *graphein*) = Old writing.

Handwritten Books

In the Ancient world there was no [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

- ✱ Every book was a hand-made, unique version of that book.
- ✱ You cannot copy a book by hand without introducing errors.
- ✱ If you don't believe me go home and hand-copy the Gospel of Matthew. If you can do it without mistakes I'll buy you lunch.
- ✱ Some scribes were barely literate — copying texts they could not read proficiently and could not understand. They know the alphabet and can copy letters in order - but are poorly prepared to analyze the text they have copied for errors.
- ✱ They are often bored and wearied of spending long hours copying manuscripts and while we may imagine them as pious and earnest — they are mere humans like the rest of us.

Marginal Notes Actually by Scribes

No kidding these are found in the manuscripts we have!

- ✻ “It is very cold.”
- ✻ “Now I have written the whole thing: for Christ’s sake give me a drink.”
- ✻ “Writing is excessive drudgery. It crooks my back, it dims my sight, and it twists my stomach.”
- ✻ “St. Patrick of Armagh, deliver me from this writing!”
- ✻ “As the harbor is welcome to the sailor, so is the last line to the scribe.”
- ✻ This one not on a bible manuscript but on a theological treatise - “*Excrementum toro.*”
- ✻ Codex Vaticanus — “Fool and knave — leave the old reading!”

About the Manuscripts We Have

- ✱ We have 5400+ manuscripts of the New Testament.
- ✱ No two are alike!
- ✱ *Most* are Medieval in origin — themselves being copies of copies of copies. [5th to the 15th centuries CE].
- ✱ Oldest fragment we have is from Second Century CE - roughly 100 years after Jesus.
 - ✱ It is the size of a credit card.
- ✱ Oldest whole books are *much* later — late 3rd century, first whole bibles are 4th c.
- ✱ John Mill in 17th Century
 - ✱ He has access to roughly 100 manuscripts. Creates apparatus of “significant” deviations among the manuscripts. More than 30,000! Critics. “Mill has worked to render the bible uncertain.”

Kinds of Scribal Errors / Changes

- ✱ Bad spelling.
- ✱ Mis-hearing the reader.
- ✱ *Parablepsis*
- ✱ Adding Stories they knew — Woman caught in adultery [John 7:53 - 8:11].
- ✱ Changing stories to “fix” perceived errors/problems. The end of Mark for example.



Literacy - it's effect on hermeneutics

- ◆ 1450 CE — Gutenberg improves printing in Western Europe with metal moveable type.
- ◆ In 1450 CE the literacy rate in Europe is estimated at less than 5%.
- ◆ By 1500 CE 40,000 titles have been published (roughly 2 million books created out of these titles).
- ◆ A good portion are ancient texts like the Bible but probably fewer than you think. Why?

Ideas about “text,” — Inerrancy.

- ◆ The idea that there is *a* text is a fairly modern idea.
 - ◆ By the time of Calvin (16th century) printing has become so ubiquitous that notions of “text” are changing because *for the first time ever* you can accurately reproduce hundreds of thousands of copies of the text which are virtually *identical*. It is easy to forget the sloppy process which reigned for nearly 1800 years prior to modern printing.
 - ◆ This leads to assumptions about the text being a fixed, permanent, and accurate version of the Bible. Ideas about *inerrancy* of scripture are non-existent prior to the time when you could have many copies printed which appeared to be identical. Only in 18th & 19th C. does this idea begin to assert itself.

Why is inerrancy appealing?

- ◆ I *suspect* that those who find it appealing do so because:
- ◆ If we go back to Plato's ideas about perfection and truth and knowledge — to claim that the text is inerrant is to say (in effect) that it is
 - ◆ Timeless, Universal, Necessary, & Certain.