



Introduction to BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

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Class Notes – Part 2

Three SUBJECTIVE Hermeneutical Gaps

“Wonderful things in the Bible I see, most of them put there by you and by me”—Unknown

It is important to realize that we all come to the Scriptures with pre-existing “grids” through which we “filter” the Scriptures as we read/interpret/apply them. To the extent that our “grids” are biblical, they may serve as a help to the overall process. But to the extent that our grids are based on our prior worldview, belief system, experiences, culture, personality, etc. it may hinder our ability to properly interpret and apply the Scriptures.

The challenge/problem is that most of the time we are completely unaware when our “grids” may be getting in the way. Thus, we need to humbly admit before God our need for the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit when we approach the Scriptures (Psalm 119:18).

1. Current UNDERSTANDING—*“What We Think We Know Already”*
2. Current BELIEFS—*“What We Believe Already”*
3. Current OPINIONS— *“How We Feel About the Subject Already”*

The Role Of The Holy Spirit In Biblical Interpretation

What the Holy Spirit DOES do in Biblical Interpretation:

One of the main ministries of the Holy Spirit for the believer in regards to Bible study and interpretation is the work of “_____”.

Illumination means “enlightenment, clarification, explanation”. Thus, this particular ministry of the Holy Spirit helps believers properly understand the Scriptures and see how it applies to their lives.

Passages that support “illumination”:

- Psalm 119:18
- 1 Corinthians 2:14
- 1 John 2:27

What the Holy Spirit does NOT do in Biblical Interpretation:

- The Spirit does not give new “revelation”. Rather, the Holy Spirit helps the diligent student to properly understand what has always been clearly stated in the text.
- Similarly, the Spirit does not give special “hidden” meanings to a select few that somehow has been missed by a host of other diligent students/teachers of the Word.
- The Spirit does not “do the hard work” for the believer. Rather, He helps the believer in his pursuit to love God with all his mind.

The Role of the Believer in Biblical Interpretation

- The believer must humbly acknowledge his/her need for the Holy Spirit (Psalm 119:18)
- The believer is responsible to study the Scriptures diligently in order to correctly handle the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15).
- The believer must diligently seek to overcome the objective hermeneutical “gaps” (Historical-Grammatical-Rhetorical-Theological) in order to understand what would have been the most natural, straightforward message to the original audience.
- The believer must humbly acknowledge that he carries within at least three subjective hermeneutical “gaps” to the text (Current Understanding, Beliefs, and Opinions) and ask God to reveal how these may be skewing the proper interpretation of the text.
- The believer must carry an attitude which allows the Scriptures to stand in judgment over the student, rather than the student over the Scriptures.

PICKING UP THE RIGHT INTERPRETIVE “LENS”

As mentioned before, the Bible was written in a wide variety of literary styles. Each literary style has its own form, features and function with a particular set of interpretive “rules”. One of the challenges of proper interpretation is knowing how to properly interpret a passage in view of the literary style in which it is presented. In other words, which interpretive “lens” to pick up and use depends on the literary style that the author chose to use when communicating the heart of God. We will now look at six literary styles along with the rules associated with each form and function.

1.) New Testament Epistles

The Typical FORM of an Epistle is:

- Greeting
- Opening prayer or thanksgiving
- Main Body
- Closing Remarks

The Typical FEATURES of an Epistle are:

- A systematic (that is, a carefully arranged) presentation of doctrinal facts (theology)
- A motivating challenge to apply those doctrinal facts (application)
- A focus on the Person and work of Jesus Christ
- A focus on the Past-Present-Future work of our salvation:
 - Justification (past)
 - Sanctification (present)
 - Glorification (future)
- U_____ Commands--That is, instruction which applies to all people of all times.
- L_____ Commands--That is, instruction which applied only to the particular congregation that the apostle was writing to.

The Typical FUNCTIONS of an Epistle are:

- Teach T_____.
- Provide practical A_____ and E_____ Instruction
- Provide specific I_____ to a particular situation.

Interpretive Questions:

- What is the theology being systematically presented?
- What are the “universal” application points being made? That is, should these instructions apply to all people at all times of all cultures?
- What are the “local” application points being made? That is, should these instructions be understood as being only for the 1st century church that the apostle was writing to?

2.) Biblical Narrative

The Typical FORM of Biblical Narrative is:

- Introduction—*How does the beginning of the story prepare you to hear the “main point” of the narrative?*
- Spiritual Challenge begins—*What is the conflict, problem or challenge facing the main character(s)?*
- Spiritual Challenge continues—*What complications arise in the story? How is it developed?*
- Spiritual Challenge is resolved—*How is the conflict/challenge resolved and who resolves it?*
- Conclusion—*How does the story end?*

The Typical FEATURES of Biblical Narrative are:

- Reveals how God has W_____ with and S_____ to mankind throughout human history.
- Reveals how mankind has R_____ to God throughout human history.
- Reveals how God continues to work His R_____ purposes throughout human history.

The Typical FUNCTIONS of Biblical Narrative are:

- Provides a character study of G_____.
- Provides a character study of M_____.
- Reveals God's continuing plan of R_____.
- Teaches the consequences of S_____.
- Teaches the benefits of R_____.

Interpretive Questions:

- What does this narrative teach me about the character of God?
- What does this narrative teach me about the character of man?
- What does this narrative teach me about the redemptive plan of God?
- What does this narrative teach me about the consequence of sin?
- What does this narrative teach me about the benefits of righteousness?

SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES FOR THE GOSPELS:

- How does this story reveal Jesus Christ as L_____?
- How does this story reveal Jesus Christ as S_____?
- What is the other Gospel writers' P_____ on this same event?