



Hermeneutics, Part 1

The Basics of Bible
Study

What are Hermeneutics?

- Definition: The tools by which we uncover meaning.
 - It's the method you take when you study your bible
 - It's the way that you approach the text.
- Goal: To discover meaning.

Why Concern Ourselves With Hermeneutics?

I thought Scripture was plain and understandable?

Why can't I just open up my Bible and read for myself?

- Barriers
 - Language
 - Culture
 - Geography
 - History

Barriers: Language

- Words
 - Simple vocabulary
- Grammar
 - Having a Greek/Hebrew lexicon is not enough
 - Understanding the rules of Hebrew and Greek grammar vs. English

- Figures of Speech/Idioms

“ויחר אפ יהוה בם וילך”

“And the nose of YHWH was kindled against them”

“So the anger of the LORD burned against them” –
Numbers 12:9 NAS77

Barriers: Language cont.

- Can you read this?
- אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הֵלֵךְ בְּעֵצַת רָשָׁעִים וּבְדַרְךְ חָטָאִים לֹא עָמַד וּבִמְוֹשֵׁב לְצִיִּים לֹא יֵשֵׁב:
 - Blessed is the the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked ones. And in the path of sinners he does not stand; and in the seat of scoffers he does not sit. –Psalm 1:1
- You're Bible is only as inspired as it reflects original text!
 - Choice of translation is your first hermeneutical decision.

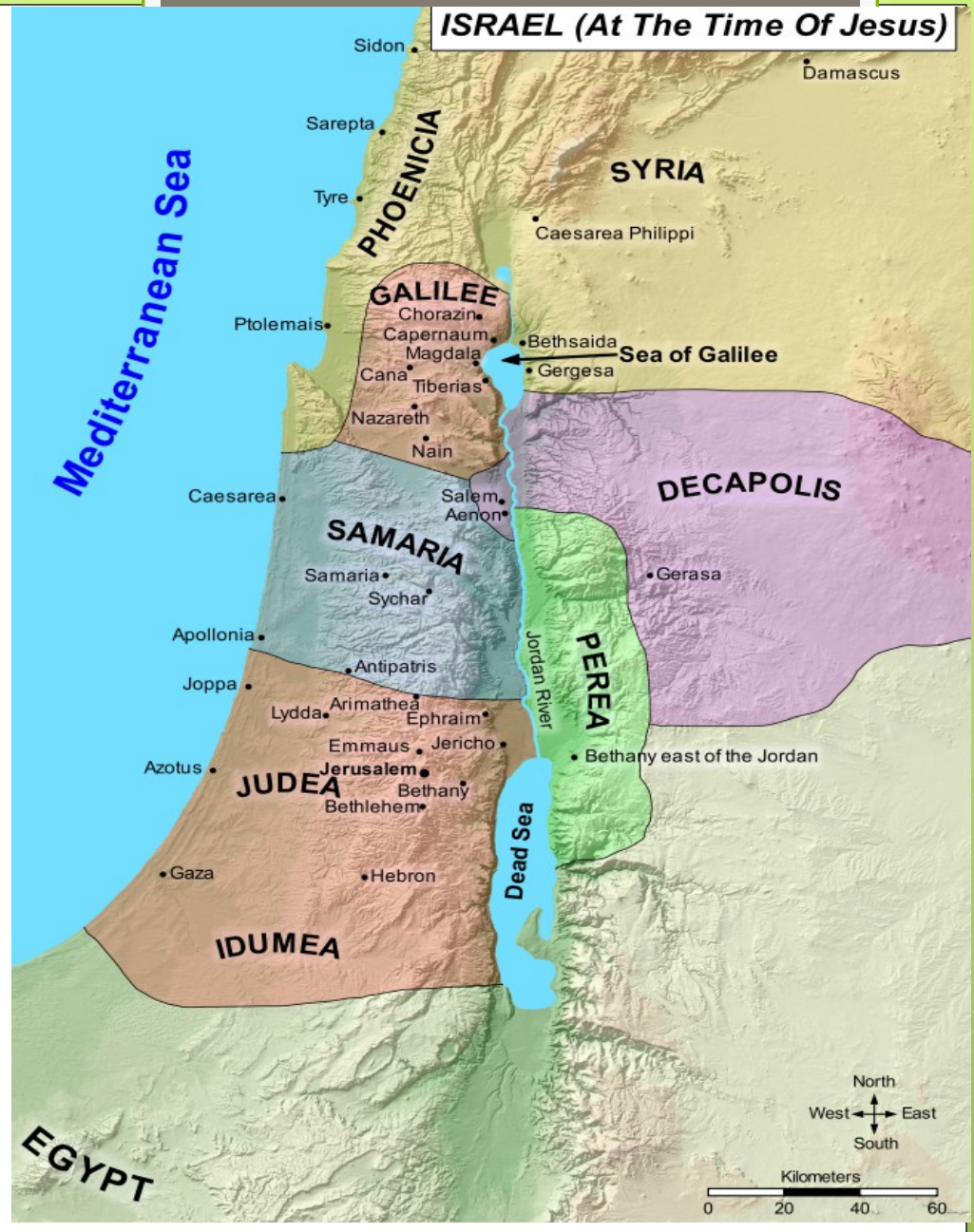
Barriers: Culture

- Psalm 133
 - Oil running down the beard of Aaron?
- Ruth 4:1-2, 7
 - Shoe swapping? Gate sitting?
- 2 Samuel 10:1-5
 - Shaved off only half of their beards?
 - Why do they have to stay in Jericho?

Joshua



John 4



Barriers: History

- John 4
- Philippians 1:13, 3:20, 4:22
 - Acts 16:11-40

What is the goal of Bible study?

- !
 - We want to know what God has said.

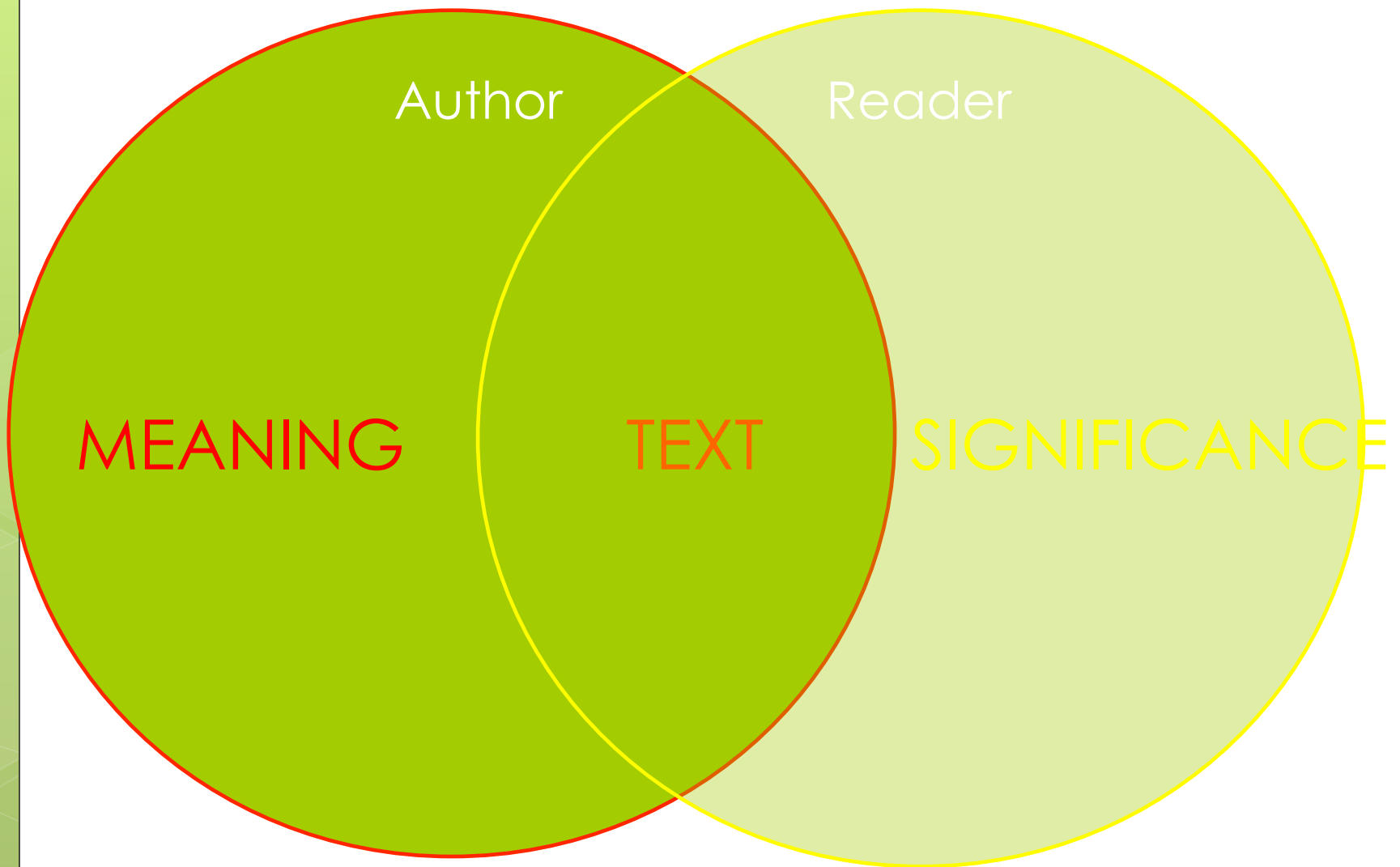
What is the source of meaning?

Who get's to decide what the text
“means”?

- The One who wrote the text gets the only input as to its meaning.

Meaning: Authorial Intent

- Authorial Intent vs. Reader Response
 - Authorial Intent: The one who wrote the text determines the meaning of the text
 - Reader Response: The one who reads the text is free to adapt meaning to his/her own personal situation
- We are not free to project our own meaning onto Scripture!



Meaning: Single Meaning

Can meaning change over time?

Can a text have more than one meaning?

Single Meaning cont.

- The concept of single meaning is not limited to the Biblical text.
- Communication would not be possible without it.
 - A cookbook
 - A phone book
 - The news paper
 - A memorandum from your boss
 - A parking ticket under your wiper blade
- Why would we be so arrogant to suggest that the Word of God is so much less authoritative than these things?



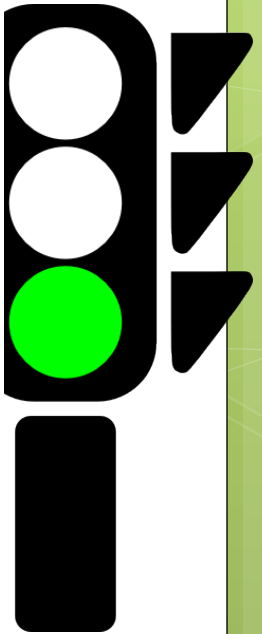
Genesis

The Account of Creation

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ²The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the

Genesis 1:1
NLT

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One MEANING—Many IMPLICATIONS

- Jeremiah 29:11

- This verse is not written TO you

- It is written FOR you (1 Cor 10:11)

- So who was it written to? (Jer 29:1)

- The Meaning: God is promising the exiles in Babylon that He has not and will not abandon or neglect His covenant Promise to Abraham and to his seed.

- An Implication: Because we know that God is a faithful God that did not throw away His covenant people, even after they experienced exile, we can know that He will not throw us away, even when we stumble and fall.

What percent of a sermon is spent explaining a text vs. applying the text?

Our Hermeneutics

○ Literal

- The text means exactly what it says

○ Grammatical

- The grammar and syntax of original language matters
- The details of the English matter

○ Historical

- The setting, audience, and situation matters
- If you're the first person in the history of the church to come up with an interpretation, you're probably wrong.

Helpful Ideas to Apply These Tools

○ Literal

- When you find the plain meaning of the text, look no further

○ Grammatical

- Learn Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic
- OR get a Bible that is faithful to the original languages

○ Historical

- Do your research (It's called bible STUDY after all)
- Look at the maps in the back of your Bible
- Listen to sermons, read your footnotes, read commentaries
 - See if anyone else interprets a passage the same way



Hermeneutics, Part 2

The Dangers of
Inconsistency

Importance of Authorial Intent



Beth Moore 

@BethMooreLPM

Follow



“Come let us reason together.”
— God, Is.1:18.

The most endangered species on our side of the planet is a reasonable human. Honestly, we're at risk of this hair-trigger reactive-culture turning us into a bunch of psychopaths. Protect your reasonableness. You'll be a rare breed.



KMFoster @k_fosterius · Mar 25



Replying to @BethMooreLPM

So relevant for today when disagreeing is equated to hating.



Lisa Sperber @LisabetteS · Mar 25



Replying to @BethMooreLPM

The context of this (partial) verse is sin and rebellion against God and the need for repentance. Not reasoning between 2 human beings for example.



Popular Interpretive Approaches

○ Naturalist Hermeneutic

- Takes Scripture and places it under the “authority” of science.

○ Covenantal Hermeneutic

- OT must be interpreted in light of the NT
- Looks at all of Scripture through the lens of the NT church replacing Israel as God’s covenant people
 - Disregards Authorial Intent, Original Audience, and Single meaning
 - Romans 11?

○ Christocentric Hermeneutic

- Looks for Christ under every rock and tree in the OT. Where one doesn’t find Him, they insert Him.
- Flirts with Allegory
 - Song of Songs?
 - Esther?

The Naturalistic Hermeneutic

- Usually seen in the first 11 chapters of Genesis
- Is a six day creation really necessary?
 - Undermines the family – Humanity was created as a family unit
 - Undermines the Gospel – Jesus came as the better Adam
 - Mitigates sin and the curse – Just part of evolution

The Covenantal Hermeneutic

- **How much NT is necessary to interpret the OT?**
 - **The Gospels?**
 - All four weren't complete until the 90's
 - **Paul's writings?**
 - Pretty arbitrary Standard
 - **The whole NT?**
 - Was anything knowable between the resurrection of Jesus (early 30's) and John's Revelation (early 90's)?

Implications?

- What would it mean if the OT had to be read and understood through the NT?
 - Either there's more than one meaning
 - Double Meaning Doesn't exist
 - The meaning has changed over time
 - Indicating an untrustworthy God
 - Or the original meaning was not knowable
 - Indicating that zero men were redeemed before the NT

Prove it

- Popular Example: Matthew 5:21-48
- Is Jesus “redefining” Deuteronomy?
 - vv. 21-48 are not being “redefined” but EXPLAINED
 - Matt. 5:21-48 = Deut. 19-26
- Jesus believes in authorial intent!
 - The NT needs to be read in light of the OT, NOT the other way around

The Christocentric Hermeneutic

- Everything = Jesus
- This is allegory with a fancy title
- What is wrong with interpreting the Bible allegorically?
 - Defies Authorial Intent
 - Defies Single Meaning
 - Allegory is not a genre of Scripture
 - Side bar – Parables are not Allegories

The Extremes

Augustine's Interpretation of Luke 10:30-37

the traveler = Adam

Jerusalem = the heavenly city from which Adam fell

Jericho = Adam's resulting morality

the robbers = the devil and his demons

stripping him = depriving Adam of his immortality

beating him = encouraging Adam to sin

leaving him half dead = Adam was dead spiritually but retained some knowledge of God

the priest and Levite = the ineffective ministry of the old covenant

the good Samaritan = Jesus Christ

Cont.

binding the wounds = restraining from sin

the oil = the comfort of the Holy Spirit

the wine = exhortation to do good works

the donkey = the body of Christ

the inn = the church

the two coins = the two commandments of love

the innkeeper = the apostle Paul

the return of the Samaritan = the resurrection of Christ

History of Allegory

- Allegory was the main hermeneutic of the medieval church.
- Stemming from a desire to keep Christ at the center, mixed with a lack of proper schooling, they created their own meaning for any portions of Scripture that didn't fit their mold
- A main reason to keep Scriptures away from the laity.

History of Allegory cont.

- Reformation happened after a regaining of the original languages and growing popularity of literal interpretation.
- The Protestant reformation was a **hermeneutical reformation** before it was a **theological reformation**.

Allegory Today

- Allegory has never died.
- Still used today in many forms.
- Many “reformed” teachers and preachers abandon the literal interpretation of the text when things get messy.
 - Particularly in prophecy

Hosea 1:1-2

- “Here interpreters labor much, because it seems very strange that the Prophet should take a harlot for a wife. Some say that this was an extraordinary case. Certainly such a license could not have been borne in a teacher...
- ...It would have then exposed the Prophet to the scorn of all, if he had entered a brothel and taken to himself a harlot; for he speaks not here of an unchaste woman only, but of a woman of wantonness, which means a common harlot.”
- - John Calvin

John Calvin, *Commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets: Hosea* (1st vol. Translated by John Owen. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, Reprint 1979), 43.

Hosea cont.

- Calvin misses the entire point of Hosea and God's mandate for him
 - Be a living example to illustrate God's relationship to Israel
 - Israel was not a YHWH worshipping people prior to the exodus
 - They worshiped the golden calf - Exod 32
 - They practiced satanic sacrifices after the exodus - Lev 17:7; Deut 32:17
 - They fled from YHWH
 - YHWH promises to restore them
- There is no need to allegorize the plain and simple meaning of the text.

Lack of Allegorical Interpretations in Scripture

- Daniel interpreting Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2; Jeremiah 25:11)
- Jesus interpreting Genesis [literal flood] (Matt. 24:32-41)
- Paul interpreting Genesis [literal Adam] (Romans 5:14)
- Author of Hebrews interprets the first 11 chapters of Genesis literally (Hebrews 11:1-7)

How much allegory is
acceptable in our
interpretation?

None!

How to Approach Scripture

Humbly!

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is
understanding.” – Proverbs 9:10

“Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those
who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words lest
He reprove you, and you be proved a liar.” _ Proverbs
30:5-6



**The only question that needs to be asked
is this:**

At the end of the day are you going to submit to Scripture and believe what God has said in plain language,

OR

Are you going to force Scripture through your manmade grid to get the answer that you desire?

- **We believe in a God breathed Bible**
 - And so we interpret it literally
- **We believe that words have but one meaning, the meaning placed there by the author (i.e. The Holy Spirit)**
 - Meaning is for us to discover not to invent
 - And so study is required
- **We believe that these are the very and precise words of Almighty God**
 - And so we come to the Scriptures humbly and submit ourselves to Scripture and not the other way around.

○ We believe that the only way to interpret Scripture is

○ Literally

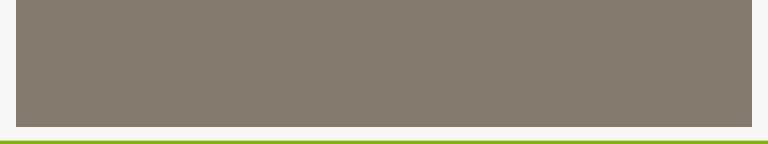
- What God has written, He has written

○ Grammatically

- In context with the whole and confined to the rules of human language

○ Historically

- To understand original author's intent to the original audience
- to avoid any “new” doctrine



“The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.” – Ecclesiastes 12:13

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