

HERMENEUTICS

A BASIC COURSE ON HOW TO STUDY YOUR BIBLE

AS TAUGHT BY
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I. INTRODUCTION

This course is not meant to be an exhaustive in depth attempt to explain how to interpret your Bible. It is a basic course seeking merely to give the student of Holy Writ the fundamental principles of how to properly begin to interpret the text of scripture.

We must not only affirm the inerrancy of the scriptures, but must acknowledge its authority, by not being slothful in our interpretation of it. There are many who will say that the Bible is the very Word of God and then mishandle it, when they seek to explain the text of scripture.

If our Bible is the infallible Word of the living God, and I believe it is, then why do we not treat it as such, when we seek to explain the message that has been delivered to us in it? Many godly men have lost their lives or put their lives in jeopardy in order to bring us an English translation of the text of scripture. We should then seek to not mishandle God's Word, but see that we handle it with care, so that we not only honor God, but also honor those who put their lives in jeopardy to bring its message to us.

Since all of us are finite limited creatures and all of us descended from a common fallen ancestor and all of us at one time were alienated and enemies of God, then we all come to the text of scripture with biases or presuppositions and we must be careful that we do not read our own opinions into the text of scripture.

The Bible was not written for the scholar *per se*, but neither was it written for the lazy and undisciplined person who is unwilling to apply the time and effort to its sacred pages. Since God commands that we seek him while he may be found and that we search diligently for wisdom and that we study so that we might rightly handle the Word of Truth, then we must come to the Bible realizing that we will not get a sound interpretation of its contents, unless we are willing to set aside the time to carefully search the Word of God.

II. WHAT IS 'HERMENEUTICS'?

Ecclesiastes 8:1 *Who is as the wise man? And who knoweth the interpretation of a thing?*

The word “hermeneutics” comes from the Greek word *hermeneuo* which means “to interpret” and is derived from Hermes, the Greek god who brought the messages of the gods to humans as well as interpreted it for them. Thus, the word *hermeneuo* came to refer to bringing someone to an understanding of something in his language.

Before someone says wait a minute, we shouldn't use words that derive their meanings from the Greek name of a Greek god, let me tell you that today we all use words that derived their meanings from ancient languages such as Greek or Latin. The word *apologetics* comes from the Greek language. The word *ordination* comes from the Latin language. Even the names of the days of the week come from the worship of certain pagan deities such as: Sunday — the worship of the sun god and Saturday — is the worship of the god Saturn.

Can we find the word *hermeneuo* in the Bible? Turn to Luke 24:27.

Luke 24:27 *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*

The word “expounded” comes from the Greek word *dihermeneuo*. ‘Dia’ means through, give a rough breathing to “E” and we have the exact word from which our English word *Hermeneutics* is derived, *hermeneuo*. The word *dihermeneuo* means to translate, interpret, or explain. In other words, Jesus began at Moses and the prophets and interpreted or explained unto them all things concerning him.

So then *hermeneutics* is the science and art of interpreting the Bible. By using certain recognized and established principles we seek to understand the exact meaning of the authors of scripture. The Bible is not a book on *hermeneutics*, but we see the importance on proper interpretation, in the Bible.

Nehemiah 8:8 *So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.*

Luke 24:25 *Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to*

believe all that the prophets have spoken:

Luke 24:26 *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*

Luke 24:27 *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*

Acts 17:11 *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

2 Peter 3:16 *As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*

Another word I will be using through this study is *exegesis*. It has been customary to specify *hermeneutics* as the theory of interpretation and *exegesis* as the application of the theory to the text. In other words *exegesis* is the critical interpretation of your text. It is what you have come to the conclusion that the text says by applying principles of *hermeneutics* and bringing forth the historical-grammatical-redemptive meaning of each book or chapter that you have studied. In other words, this method does not seek to apply the text to today's contemporary society, but seeks to understand the text in the historical setting in which it was written.

However, the opposite of *exegesis* is *eisegesis*. This method does not seek to extract from the text the meaning of the authors of the text, but this method seeks to read into the text a meaning that is foreign to the text or does not exist in the text. You do not want to come to the text with a preconceived idea of what you think the text says. Martin Luther, the great Reformer, once said, "The best teacher is the one who does not bring his meaning into the Scripture, but gets his meaning from the Scripture."

The last word I need to define is *exposition*. This is to deliver, usually through the form of preaching and teaching, the meaning of the text and to apply it meaningfully to our present age.

Hence you have heard the term *expository preaching*. This is preaching that seeks to make known the interpretation of the text while applying it meaningfully to your life. It has been said that *hermeneutics* is like a

cookbook. It explains how to bake the cake. *Exegesis* is the preparing and baking the cake and *exposition* is the serving of the cake.

Hermeneutics, *exegesis*, and *preaching* form one continuum. The minister who stands in the tradition of the Reformation recognizing that the minister is the minister of the Word of God [*ministerium verbi divine*] believes that the center of gravity in his ministry is the Word of God. This means that the greatest responsibility of a ministry is the ministry of the Word of God to the congregation. Preaching must be centered in the interpretation and application of Holy Scripture.

Therefore the message from the pulpit will be *Biblical*, *exegetical*, and *expository*. Holy Scripture is the source and norm of preaching; *exegesis* is the scientific ascertaining of the meaning of the text; and *exposition* is its relevant proclamation to the congregation. The concept that binds these three together is the concept of the Word of God. The scripture is the Word of God written; *exegesis* is the Word of God understood; and *preaching* is the Word of God made relevant to time and place. This high view of preaching as an important form of the Word of God is in keeping with the high view of preaching maintained at the time of the Reformation by both Luther and Calvin.^[1]

III. WHY IS 'HERMENEUTICS' IMPORTANT?

Hermeneutics is important because without a proper interpretation of the Word of God we could not develop any type of systematic theology. We would not be able to recognize how each doctrine in the Bible harmonizes or fits together. Also since God demands certain things from us, without a proper interpretation, we would not be able to obey what he has said.

Another reason *hermeneutics* is important is because of the huge gap that exist between us and the text. We all can read the morning paper and the interpretation of what is in it comes spontaneously because we live in the era of the events taking place, in which we are reading. This is not so with the Bible. There is a huge gap between the interpreter of scripture and the text of which he is interpreting. *Hermeneutics* helps to bridge this gap by applying rules to what we are studying. This isn't only used with respect to the Bible, but with all pieces of ancient literature. Since there is a time separation between us and what is in the Bible, then there is a *historical gap*; in that our culture is different, there is a *cultural gap*; in that the original text was in another language than our own, there is a *linguistic gap*; in that the documents originated in another country, there is the *geographical gap* and the *biological gap*. In that usually a totally different attitude towards life and the universe exists in the text it can be said that there is a *philosophical gap*. The last could relate to how the universe was put together or who put it together.

The fact that the Bible is written in different literary genres such as poetry, parable, prophecy, history, and such like; makes the use of *hermeneutics* even more necessary. The Bible uses figures of speech, such as: allegory, idioms, and hyperbole to bring us the message of God.

Hermeneutics is needed in order to keep the *exegete* or the one seeking a proper interpretation from making wrong interpretations between the Old and New Testaments. This has been a failure of the church in general. Many things commanded in the Old are not to be engrafted into the New, unless specifically stated in scripture.

Hermeneutics is also helpful to aide us in distinguishing from our own presuppositional biases and what the Bible actually says.

Hermeneutics will keep us from falling prey to a religious cult. It is funny that some cults carry the same Bible as we do, yet have a totally different doctrine. Listen to James Sire: “If traditional Christianity affirms the Bible as its sole authority — Sola Scriptura, as the Reformers said — how can these very different religious movements [*i.e.*, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and Christian Science] claim Scripture for their own? The obvious answer is the right one, I believe. They can only do so by violating the principles of sound literary interpretation.”^[2]

Also *hermeneutics* aides teachers, such as myself, in bringing an accurate interpretation before the hearers, in order that I might feed the flock of God.

One more thing before we finish this section is that *hermeneutics* is not used to feed our intellectual pride or academic interest, but is used so that we become good interpreters of God’s Word and do not mishandle what has been entrusted to us.

IV. NECESSITIES OF A SOUND BIBLICAL INTERPRETER

The *sine qua non* or necessary element for one to properly interpret the Bible is that he must first be born again. This is not to say that some individuals who are not born again cannot understand some of the historical, contextual, or on surface-level meanings of the scriptures. But when it comes to understanding the in depth meaning or when it comes to understanding fully the wickedness of his sin or the Holiness of God, he will always be puzzled about the plan of redemption that God has set forth. The Bible is clear that the unregenerate man cannot receive the things of God. Let's read 1 Cor. 2:14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned." Romans 8:7-8 also states: "Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." In other words, for a man to know the mind of the Spirit, as it is expressed through the scripture, an individual must have the Spirit, which is given through the new birth.

Another necessary element for one to properly interpret the text is that the *exegete* must be open-minded. In other words the interpreter must be willing to read material that is outside the belief of his own camp. This is the failure of most that criticize the Calvinistic viewpoint and hold to an Arminian viewpoint of scripture. This is also why those who are in the Calvinistic camp can defend the Calvinist belief in God alone in salvation, because everyone is by nature Arminian and seeks to put man at the center of everything, yet Calvinists recognize that God is at the center of everything. But, when a man comes to the knowledge, that God works all things after the council of his own will, that individual sees clearly what the Arminian tries so dearly to cling to and this is that he wants to be autonomous or wants to govern himself. So one must be open minded and willing to read beliefs that he does not hold to. Listen to Charles Spurgeon on this subject.

"I soon began to find out that there was a good deal to be said, after all, concerning some matters that Dr. Gill and John Calvin did not mention, and I found that I was obliged somewhat to stretch my charity, and to take to my heart some brethren who did not quite see all things which those enlightened men saw. And, moreover, I found out that I did not

know everything, and that I had a good deal still to learn, and I find the same thing every day. I hope at all times to hold firmly all the truth I have received. I intend to grasp tightly with one hand the truths I have already learned, and to keep the other hand wide open to take in the things I do not yet know.”

Also the wise interpreter of scripture will come to the scripture believing that it is the infallible Word of God. Unless a man starts with this presupposition he will always ere in his interpretation of the scripture.

For instance, many believe that the proponents of classical theology worship at the shrine of Aristotle because we believe that the Bible is logically coherent. Unless one comes to the Bible believing that it is the revealed revelation of God to man and that he has made it intelligible, then one will ere in their interpretation of it. This does not mean that the Bible doesn't contain difficult passages, seemingly contradictions, or hard sayings, but as the *exegete* works through the text these will disappear or harmonize altogether.

Finally never decide that your interpretation is correct without first laying it out before someone else or tracing back through the history of the church and checking to see what other men of God have said. Again Charles Spurgeon said:

“You are not such wiseacres as to think or say that you can expound Scriptures without assistance from the works of divines and learned men who have labored before you in the field of exposition. It seems odd, that certain men, who talk much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves, should think so little of what he has revealed to others.”

I must add here that the Spirit never gives new revelation, but only illuminates our hearts and minds, with the interpretation of what has already been written. Those on TV who claim that God spoke to them and told them to do certain things and then try to make their personal convictions mandatory for the church, without any scripture to back it up, are false teachers. If God reveals something to an individual in a particular scripture, then everyone ought to be able to read that scripture and get that same interpretation.

It is true that the Reformers such as Calvin and Luther believed in the witness

of the Spirit. In other words they rejected the authority of the Church of Rome to decide what is authoritative, the church or scripture, but instead believed that as they studied the scripture the Spirit would point them in the right direction. In other words, the inward work of the Spirit bore witness that the scriptures were authoritative and not the church declaring the scriptures authoritative.

The scripture only has one interpretation. It might have many applications, but only one interpretation. The theologian and the housewife should get the same interpretation. I had a man at work try to tell me that he could read the Bible and get one meaning and I could read it and get another. I told him that this does injustice to the natural meaning of words. If we conclude this, then it would make God speak with a forked tongue. No! Peter himself said that no prophecy came through any one's private interpretation, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Therefore what God says to one individual throughout the scriptures, he says to all.

V. IF WE ALL ARE CARRYING THE SAME BIBLE, THEN WHY ARE THERE SO MANY DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS?

Many Christians believe that if they simply pray, the Holy Spirit will give them the proper interpretation. Don't assume that because you pray that your interpretation is right. Laziness in the study is no excuse for a poor interpretation. The other abuse here is that many are not so much concerned about interpretation as they are with an idiosyncratic meaning of the text or "what this verse means to me . . ." [3]

One reason for the many different interpretations is because some people are lazy and do not study the text for themselves. They would rather listen to some preacher or teacher and think that he has the right interpretation. This is how the Roman Catholics do it. They believe that the priest should interpret the scriptures to the people. Yet, there are others who go to the other extreme and ignore church history, other Bible commentators and such and end up with strange and contradictory interpretations.

Another reason for different interpretations is because many hold to tradition. They cry that this is what we have always believed and instead of searching into the matter they just cling to it. This is true of every generation. Yet the opposite of this is also true. A movement can start in the church, such as today's Pentecostal movement which is only a hundred years old, and a generation or two later it becomes the prominent thought pattern. No one is concerned about when this movement originated or has this been the traditional thought of the church throughout her history. Nor does anyone search out to see if the fundamental doctrines this movement holds to is what the church rejected centuries before. This leads me to my next point.

Another reason for false or wrong interpretations is and I will quote from Darrel M. Erkel:

"The presence of false teachers among the visible church helps to contribute to wrong views of the Bible's message. Had the members of our churches been careful Bible students (including church leaders), the popularity of such doctrines as Word-Faith theology would have been less devastating within evangelicalism. It is only among an ignorant and scripturally illiterate church that such heretical movements can flourish." [4]

Another reason for many different interpretations is because some individuals have not been granted the necessary gift by God in order to properly understand scripture. This may be because of worldly distractions, pride, or hardness of heart.

The last reason I will give for many different interpretations is because most churches do not offer a class on *hermeneutics*. The Pastors of these churches do not believe that ordinary church time should be devoted to this kind of teaching, but that it belongs in the seminaries and colleges. But this is not true. If we are to teach our congregations how to study and come to knowledge, then we must give them the proper tools to bring them to that point.

I will close this section with a quote from Daniel B. Wallace:

“Don’t isolate your study from your worship. Those in seminary especially should take very seriously the mandate for those who would be ministers of the Word: *Study!* Exposition that is not borne of hard study, produces a warm fuzzy feeling that lacks substance. It is candy for the soul. At the same time, if your study is merely a cognitive exercise rather than a part of the worship you offer up to God, it will have a cold and heartless effect. Eating a rock may be a way to get your daily minerals, but who would want to take their minerals in such an indigestible form?”^[5]

VI. HOW TO APPLY BASIC HERMENEUTICS

When interpreting the text of scripture we must learn to ask the appropriate questions.

1. Who is the author and to whom is he writing?
2. What was the historical setting during the time of the writing of this text?
3. What is the primary reason or circumstances for the author writing the text?
4. What is the message that the author was trying to convey?
5. Why did the author choose the particular words that he did verses the other words that he could have chosen?
6. How does this passage relate to the book that was written or how does it relate to the theme of the Bible in whole?
7. How can I apply this passage to my life?

If we ask the right questions, then we can pull out the intentions of the authors of Holy Scripture and be able to understand the text as it was written. Many do not do this and therefore read into the text their own bias.

1. One of the benefits of the Reformation is that the Reformers brought us back to one interpretation of every scripture. The method that was being used during the Middle Ages is a method known as the *quadriga*. This method sought to pull out of every text of scripture four distinct meanings, they were: literal, moral, allegorical, and analogical. This method led to excessive allegorization of the Bible. The Reformers brought us the *sensus literalis* method. This method was designed to seek the plain sense of Scripture or the literal interpretation of the text. This is linked closely with the grammatical-historical-redemptive method. This method focuses on the historical setting in which Scripture was written and pays close attention to the grammatical structure of the biblical text, while also seeking how it applies to the history of redemption.

Listen to Martin Luther:

“Neither a conclusion nor a figure of speech should be admitted in any

place of scripture unless evident contextual circumstances or the absurdity of anything militating against an article of faith require it. On the contrary, we must every where adhere to the simple, pure, and natural meaning of words. This accords with the rules of grammar and the usage of speech [*usus loquendi*] which God has given to men. For if everyone is allowed to invent conclusions and figures of speech according to his own whim . . . nothing to a certainty could be determined or proved concerning any one article of faith that men could not find fault with by means of some figure of speech. Rather we must avoid as the most deadly poison all figurative language which scripture itself does not force us to find in a passage.”

Some have withdrawn from using the word “literal” because they equate it with a naïve or wooden literalism. Those who have withdrawn from this term prefer the term grammatical-historical-redemptive method of interpretation. When we use the term “literal” we are not saying that every single word should be taken at its simplest meaning. There are some words that cannot be taken at their simplest meaning because they are figurative or symbolic. Jesus said in John 10 that he was the door. Now we know that Jesus is not actually a door. Yet, he is the only way to the Father. Listen to what Feinberg said, “It is not true that the literalist requires every single passage to be interpreted literally without exception.”

So scripture should be studied in light of its grammar used and in light of the context in which a word is used. Many will take the word “world” and make it mean everyone on the planet. This is not the case every time this word is used. Let’s examine several passages:

Matthew 10:22 — Jesus’ words should not be pressed, since there have always been and will continue to be people who refuse to exhibit hatred toward Christians. Jesus is speaking of most, but not all persons.

Mark 1:5 — This cannot mean each and every person, for both the Romans and Israel’s religious leaders had very little interest in John’s call to repentance.

Luke 1:21 — Rome did not tax all the inhabitants of this planet, but only those within her jurisdiction.

John 1:9 — Not every person has been enlightened, since the vast

majority of mankind remains in darkness (1 John 5:19).

John 1:10 — Within this one passage there are three different uses of “world,” which should cause Arminians to be more cautious in their claims.

John 12:19 — Certainly not everyone in the world has gone after Christ, for the majority of the Pharisees refused to.

Acts 2:17 — The phrase “all mankind” cannot refer to the entirety of the human race, but must mean people of every sort; not just the Jews, but also the Gentiles (Acts 10:45).

Acts 10:12 — The Greek says, “all four-footed animals,” but clearly means “all kinds of” as the NASB renders it (for other instances of the same, see Matthew 9:35; 10:1; Luke 11:42; 1 Timothy 6:10).

Acts 17:6 — This cannot mean every person since the Gospel had not yet reached every region on the earth, nor did the apostles upset everyone they preached the Gospel to (Acts 13:48-49; 17:10-12).

Romans 1:8 — “Whole world” cannot be taken to mean every place on earth or every person but, instead, refers to most of the regions that were occupied by Rome.

Romans 5:18 — The latter usage of “all men” can hardly mean every person, but must be interpreted in a restricted sense to denote all those in Christ.

Romans 11:26 — “All Israel” cannot mean every Israelite, but the majority or a large number of Israelites.

2 Corinthians 5:14 — “All died” cannot mean every person, for not all have died to sin (Romans 6:3-11; Colossians 3:3).

1 John 5:19 — “Whole world” cannot possibly mean every single human, since Christians have been freed from Satan’s control (Acts 26:18; 1 John 5:18).

Revelation 3:10 — “Whole world” cannot be interpreted to mean every person without exception, since Christians will be kept “from the hour of testing.”

Revelation 12:9 – “Whole world” cannot refer to all living persons,

since Christians will not be ultimately deceived by Satan.

Revelation 13:3 — “Whole earth” cannot mean each and every person, since Christians will not follow after the beast.^[6]

Many when trying to use the “world” passages, to prove that Christ died for everyone in the world, take those passages out of context and therefore they have a pretext. If we would interpret the words of scripture in light of the passage, then we will not err in our interpretation. We should also interpret passages in light of their context and in light of the Bible as a whole. If the Bible is insistent that God has sent his Son as a *ransom* for *his elect*, then certainly this cannot be everyone in the world.

This is also true about the word “law” found in Paul’s epistles. Every time the word law is used, it doesn’t always speak of the Law of Moses, but can also mean the moral law.

2. Also scripture should interpret scripture. This was the central rule of hermeneutics laid down by the Reformation. This method is called ‘the analogy of faith’ or (*Sacra Scriptura sui interpretes*) or scripture should interpret itself. If the Bible is the Word of God then it is coherent and consistent with itself. We should never make a doctrine on obscure passages of scripture, but should let the clear scriptures interpret the obscure ones.

3. We also should never make a doctrine on obscure passages of scripture or passages that are not found in our oldest manuscripts. Many will take the end of Mark’s Gospel and use it to prove that we can lay our hands on the sick and they shall recover. Yet, Mark 16:9 onward is not found in our most ancient manuscripts. Do I believe it is genuine, absolutely? But we cannot make a doctrine on a passage that is not held as genuine by the majority of scholars. If we are to defend the scriptures, then let’s do it with the scriptures that are accepted, even by the one with whom we are debating. The science of textual criticism seeks to examine all the New Testament manuscripts and piece back together the original text. This is very justifiable. Since we do not have the original manuscripts, we examine all the copies and since there are so many in existence, then we can put back together the original text.

4. We must also recognize the principle of “progressive revelation.” In other words God gave man so much revelation at a time. This continued until Christ came and through him and the apostles we were given the full

revelation of God's purposes. This is why a New Testament passage carries more weight than a passage out of Psalms. Paul in his writings gave the Church the manifold wisdom of God. Though the Bible never records a sin of Abel, Job or Daniel we know that they were sinners because Paul said that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The fact that many have not recognized the progressive revelation method has accounted for all the Old Testament customs being forced upon the consciences of the New Testament believer. So we must remember that the New interprets the Old. Therefore we start from Paul's epistles and interpret the Bible. If there is any tension between the older revelation and the newer, the older must give way to the newer. Although there are some remarkable ethical passages in the Old Testament, Christian Theology should build its ethical foundations on the New Testament.

5. We must also recognize the Christo-centric focus of the entire Bible. The one theme of both Testaments is Jesus Christ and his redemption. It is admitted that the presence of Christ in the Old Testament is not fully clear, and therefore the Christological exegesis of the Old Testament will never be free from difficulty. Martin Luther once said: "If you will interpret well and securely, take Christ with you, for he is the man whom everything concerns."

Luke 18:31 Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24:44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

John 1:45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

John 5:46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

Acts 2:30-32 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had

sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Acts 3:18 *But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.*

Acts 10:43 *To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

Acts 17:2-3 *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.*

1 Corinthians 10:4 *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

1 Peter 1:10-11 *Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*

We should then not view the Old Testament as covenant theologians do (as law centered) nor should we view the Old Testament as dispensationalists do (as Israel centered), but we should see it as Christ centered. The Bible says that God had an eternal purpose in Christ Eph. 3:11.

6. Some scholars also recognize the “sensus plenior” or (fuller sense) of scripture. This means that some recognize that Israel’s history has a deeper and far-reaching meaning than a purely grammatical-historical interpretation will allow. In other words David’s betrayal by a familiar friend in Psalms 41:9, which states: “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which

did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me”; was not a direct prophecy concerning the Messiah. Even the scripture prophesied by Hosea in Hosea 11:1 where he states: “Out of Israel have I called my Son” was not a direct prophecy concerning the Messiah, but was a prophecy concerning Israel’s history. Also where Jeremiah spoke of Rachel’s children in Jeremiah 31:15 “Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, *and* bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they *were* not,” this also was not a direct prophesy of the Messiah, but scholars recognize that the events of Israel’s history had their fuller meaning and fulfillment in Christ.

Many scholars do not hold the *sensus plenior* or fuller sense as valid, but say that the apostles were not trying to draw out the fuller or deeper meaning of Israel’s history, but were just using analogies that the Jews of Christ time would appreciate. But even if this method is valid, it is not left up to the interpreter to find this deeper meaning hidden in the events of the history of Israel, but is left in the hands of the New Testament writers to draw these analogies between Israel and Christ.

7. We should also be alert concerning the Hebrew parallelism and the poetic parallelism that is found in the Bible. This is true especially in much of the book of Psalms and Proverbs. There are many different types of poetic parallelism of which are: synonymous parallelism, synthetic parallelism, antithetical parallelism, climatic parallelism, and chiasmic parallelism. Here are three examples of these different parallelisms in scripture.

A. Synonymous parallelism — this is when the thought is identical.

Psalms 9:9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

B. Antithetical parallelism — this is when the primary and secondary ideas are in contrast.

Psalms 1:6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

C. Synthetic parallelism — is when the thought is developed or enriched by the parallel.

Job 11:18 And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety.

8. We should also be alert to figurative language in scripture. All cultures use figurative language to add color or to make their point more solid.

Today's modern usage:

- (1) What you told me was heavy.
- (2) It is raining cats and dogs.

Biblical usage:

- (1) John 1:29 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."
- (2) John 6:48 "I am that bread of life."

There are many different types of figurative language such as:

Simile — A simile is a comparison in which one thing resembles another, usually with the expression "like" or "as". See Isaiah 55:9-11; Jeremiah 23:29; Matthew 7:24-27; Mark 1:10; 1 Peter 1:24.

Metaphor — A metaphor is a comparison in which one thing is, acts like, or represents another, although the two are basically unlike. See Jeremiah 50:6; Matthew 5:13; John 6:48; 10:7, 9.

Metonymy — A metonymy is the substituting of one word for another. For example, when we refer to a decision being made by the White House, we actually mean the President of the United States. We have simply substituted the residence of the President for the President himself. See Proverbs 15:12; Jeremiah 18:18; Matthew 3:5; Mark 3:25; Hebrews 13:4.

Hyperbole — A hyperbole is a deliberate exaggeration, in which more is said than is literally meant, for the purpose of adding emphasis, attention, or force. See Deuteronomy 1:28; 2 Samuel 1:23; Psalm 6:6; Matthew 5:29-30; 19:24; 23:24.

Irony — Irony is a kind of ridicule expressed indirectly in the form of a compliment. Irony is often conveyed by the speaker's tone of voice (as in sarcasm) so that the hearers know immediately that irony is intended. See 2 Samuel 6:20; 1 Kings 18:27; Mark 7:9; 1 Corinthians 4:8, 10.

Personification — This is the ascribing of human characteristics or

actions to inanimate objects or ideas or to animals. See Isaiah 55:12; 35:1; 1 Corinthians 15:55.

Anthropomorphism — This is the ascribing of human characteristics or actions to God. See 2 Chronicles 16:9; Psalm 8:3; 31:2.

Anthropopathism — This is the ascribing of human emotions to God. See Genesis 6:6; Zechariah 8:1.

9. Another method of interpretation is the recognizing of types. Critics say typology is forced exegesis rather than an interpretation rising naturally out of the Scripture. It is seldom heard today — the preaching of types. And yet the Bible is full of them. This was a method used by Christ and some of the dearest truths he teaches are taught by type.

All I am going to give here is three characteristics of types and leave it at that.

A. There must be some notable real point of resemblance between the type and antitype. Whatever differences there may be, the former should be a true picture of the latter in some particular point.

B. The type must be designed by divine appointment to bear a likeness to the antitype. Accidental similarity between OT person and NT person does not constitute a type.

C. A type always pre-figures something future. This is different from a symbol. Old Testament types were at the same time symbols that conveyed spiritual truths to contemporaries.

10. Once we have studied a text we need to meditate on it for a while. This is exactly what Paul told Timothy. 1 Timothy 4:15 “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.” Once we have churned the text over and over in our minds we will soon let it get down into our inner beings and it will begin to speak to us. It will begin to harmonize with other scriptures that we have learned. I really did not understand certain text until I memorized them and meditated on them for a while and then one day it hits you like a ton of bricks and you say that is what this text means.

VII. COMMENTING ON COMMENTARIES

Jesus told his disciples “others have labored and you have entered into their labors.” This is particularly fitting to describe the resources available today to the interpreter of scripture, resources which represent in many cases lifetimes of work on the part of dedicated scholars. We learn, by studying commentaries, how to engage other men who have studied the scriptures and thus are more equipped to engage the authors of scripture and even encounter the Lord himself, who is the subject matter of the Bible.

1. I first want to deal with the best Bibles to use. The evangelical minister works with an accepted critical edition of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. As a general rule he trusts the scholarship that has striven to give the church the purest text possible. If a preacher is not competent in the original languages he must use English translations that are based upon a critical text of the original languages as the American Standard Version and the Revised Standard Version. If the minister prefers for personal reasons to preach from the King James Version he must at least acquaint himself with the variant readings attested in the other English versions of the Holy Scripture.^[7]

2. The primary tools for interpretation are the lexicon, the grammar, and the concordance and should always be consulted before a commentary is. One of the newest tools for the interpreter is the Theological Dictionary. This could be used to study the subject of hermeneutics, in order to get a basic understanding of how to interpret.

3. Never make the mistake of consulting a commentary first. This is a common mistake made by many individuals. Always chew on a text of scripture or study the context in which it was written.

4. Commentaries provide valuable insight into the historical setting, authorship, dates, flow of the writer’s argument, major themes through the Bible, etc. The use of Bible commentaries will aide an individual in working through problematic passages of scripture and gives great insight into preaching and teaching. Do not reject commentaries because you hold to a false belief that “the Holy Spirit teaches me so I don’t need them.” To do this is to reject the wisdom through these men, which Christ has given to build us up.

5. Buy only the best commentaries. Do not waste your money on those commentaries which focus on devotional purposes. We should read our Bible devotionally, but this shouldn't replace Bible study. There are many today who believe that since they have read their devotionals for today then they have done their duty. This is why so many have been deceived. Don't be this type of theologian. Buy those commentaries which seek to explain the text through proper hermeneutics. If one has a computer then there is no reason why he should not have a good collection of commentaries, since they are offered free through free Bible programs, on the internet.
6. Don't only buy those commentaries which agree with you, but study the opposing view points. Yet, one needs to be very cautious in this area if they do not have a working knowledge of the scriptures.
7. I would definitely buy some commentaries that are closer to the apostles, seeing that the further we get away from them, the more error that creeps in.
8. Finally, we must remember that a commentator is limited as we are. He also comes to the text with his own presuppositions and biases, so we need to examine and search even what he says.
9. As a rule of thumb it may be said that good hermeneutics is the use of good commentaries, and bad hermeneutics is their neglect.

I want to add here that the best text of scripture that one should work with is one that is an accepted critical edition of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. Textual criticism has taken all the most ancient manuscripts and studied them and pulled out of them the actual reading of the Bible. As a general rule we must trust the scholarship that has striven to give the church the purest text possible. If the interpreter is not familiar with the original languages, then he must use English translations that are based upon a critical text of the original languages, such as: the American Standard Version and Revised Standard Version. The King James translators used the manuscripts that were available in their day, but since then we have found a whole lot of older manuscripts. If the preacher prefers for personal reasons to preach from the King James Version he must at least familiarize himself with the different readings attested in the other English versions of the Holy Scripture. For example 1 John 5:7 states: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." This scripture is not in our oldest manuscripts and therefore should not

be used as a proof text as an argument for the Trinity. There are many scriptures that prove the doctrine of the Trinity, but this one should not be used.

VIII. HOW TO INTERPRET PROPHECY

1. We should first abstain from interpreting prophetic Bible passages as they are interpreted today. Many today use the “newspaper” approach to all prophecy throughout the Bible. We must recognize that a lot of what the prophet was bringing forth was spoken to the generation to whom it was given.
2. We must not assume that a prophets purpose was to prophesy of future events, but he was more of a “forth teller” of God’s message to an unrepentant people during the time of the prophet. This doesn’t mean that the prophet didn’t mention any future things in his prophecy, but when he did it would be a prediction of the Messiah and the future kingdom.
3. We must also recognize the figurative or symbolical grammar used by the prophets and seek to best understand that first in the historical time period of when it was written.
4. We must recognize that prophecy in scripture is not systematic or always prophesied as events happening or transpiring all at once. Some times the events happened suddenly and at other times the events were not fulfilled till years later.
5. We must also examine every school of thought on the prophetic scriptures. Some that I have read concerning this subject want to lean away from today’s method of interpretation of the prophetic scriptures. We must not be so narrow-minded as to not examine every viewpoint concerning some things that are prophesied as future. If the Jews could not see the two comings of the Messiah, one to suffer and the other to reign and we see through a glass darkly, as the apostle Paul said, then we must not dismiss certain viewpoints, such as those of futurists, in order to cling to our reformed views. What is prophesied as future is still future and we may not be quite sure how some things will work themselves out prophetically.

IX. HOW TO INTERPRET PARABLES

A parable is an extended metaphor or simile which compares a religious truth with a common experience or circumstance in life. As an instructional device its roots are to be found in the Old Testament and mainly in Proverbs. The Greek word *parabolic* can be found nearly fifty times in the Gospels in the connection with Jesus' ministry. This was a favorite teaching instrument of Jesus. The rabbis also used this method; however two features distinguish Jesus' parables from the rabbis.

1. Jesus' parables were marked with freshness, simplicity, and creativity, whereas those of the rabbis tended towards the pedantic or one who emphasizes trivial points and insists on adherence to rules.
2. Jesus' parables emphasized the coming kingdom, while the parables of the rabbis focused on the Torah and its manifold implications.

Parables are different from allegory in that a parable exists to establish one point, while an allegory may establish several points. At one time the church was held captive by the allegorizing of all the parables. Origen adopted the hermeneutical scheme of Philo as the most fruitful method of Biblical interpretation. This took place in the second century and to a certain extent still remains in the church today. Yet, this dominating hold of interpreting parables as allegories was broken in 1888 by the German theologian A. Julicher.

In general Jesus used three types of parables:

1. Short, pithy, similes which characterize someone or something, such as: salt of the earth, light of the world, blind leaders of blind.
2. A saying which explains a normal event in life such as: the servant is not greater than his master, you cannot serve God and mammon, the kingdom of heaven is like a net.
3. The lengthier narrative parable which has no formula of comparison and which is a fully worked out story in itself such as: the Good Samaritan Luke 10:30-37, the prodigal son Luke 15:11-32, the wedding feast Matt 22:1-14, etc.

At times however, it is hard to decide whether a given saying is parable or

allegory, as in the example of the vine and branches John 15:1, but as a rule, a parable exhibits a formal stylized introduction, especially in the cases of the sayings about a normal event of everyday life, and the narrative parable. In one “The kingdom of heaven is like . . .” and the other “A certain man . . .” Such distinctions are necessary to identify a parable.

How should we interpret parables?

1. We should look for the Christological meaning of the parable. The parables a lot of times are about Christ.
2. We should look for the kingdom implications in the parables such as: it’s closeness, description, nature, inhabitants, consummation, etc . . .
3. We should see how much of the parable Jesus interpreted himself. After which we then seek to interpret it.
4. Always look for one central truth in the parable. In the parables Jesus is not trying to teach many different truths, but only one truth.
5. We should never build entire doctrinal systems on parables. This does not mean that parables do not contain doctrine, but any doctrine gleaned from a parable must align with the doctrine of the rest of the New Testament.

We should also recognize that all the parables of Jesus were not spoken in the order in which they were written. If one would examine Matthew 13 they would see that Matthew took a collection of the parables of the kingdom and put them together. In other words as a gospel writer is telling the story of Jesus he remembers certain sayings that are significant to the accounts of Jesus’ life and so he writes them down. The gospel writers, in other words edited the sayings of Jesus as they saw fit. We must not forget that they done this under guidance of the Spirit.

Concerning the eschatological nature of the parables it used to be a common practice to read Jesus’ words as teaching the progressive improvement of man under human conditions. This is not true. Jesus’ purpose in his eschatological parables was to teach about the coming kingdom and three distinctions can be made concerning this aspect:

1. The nearness of the kingdom. Mark 1:14 records Jesus’ opening words as a call to repentance because the kingdom is at hand.
2. The imminence of the kingdom implies a separation in the human family,

some to joy and redemption and others to sorrow and judgment.

3. The kingdom will come in as a tiny mustard seed and will reach great heights in its culmination.

X. OLD TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

About one tenth of the New Testament is quotations from the Old Testament. There are about 295 separate explicit references to the Old Testament. These occupy 352 verses of the New Testament. 278 verses of the Old are used and some more than once and this is why there is a difference in numbering. There are 94 verses from the “Torah”, or Pentateuch, 99 from the “Prophets” and 85 from the “Writings”. Out of the 22 books of the Hebrew Old Testament (this is equal to our 39 books) only 8 are not referred to: Judges, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. Considering the length of some of these books or their content, it is not unlikely that these would have been quoted from.

There are at least four things to consider when dealing with quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament.

1. Many Christians assume that when a verse is quoted from the Old Testament and the words are used “Thus it was fulfilled” that this was a direct prediction of the Messiah. This doesn’t mean that the Gospel writers didn’t recognize prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament, but that Messianic prophecy was much broader than direct predictions of his coming.
2. Also we should not look for exact quotations of the Old in the New Testament. During this time period a paraphrase or quotation in your own words was sufficient to make one’s point in daily life.
3. We must also recognize that a New Testament writer was at times quoting from the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.
4. We must also recognize that all the Old Testament direct prophecies, types, and shadows found their fulfillment in Christ.

XI. THE USE OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN INTERPRETATION

Since the Bible is a collection of historical documents written within 2000-3500 years ago, all information surrounding the history of its records would be helpful to the Bible interpreter. Thus the Bible interpreter ought to acquaint himself with the customs, laws, and histories of the people that dwelt in the areas of which the Biblical histories took place.

1. Archaeological material that explains background and context:

Many have thought the patriarchs of the past were mere folktales that gathered around the origins of peoples as time progressed. Abraham was of no more significance than Aeneas, unearthed by Greeks of Magna Graecia from a motley stock of Trojan legend. This cannot now be assumed since Leonard Woolley has shown that Ur of the Chaldees was a mature literary society during the time of Abraham. This was only one place in the then crowded Euphrates valley and only one chapter of its history.

The tablets of ancient Nuzi (modern Yorgham Tepe) in northern Iraq have provided scholars with information concerning legal customs of the 15th century BC, customs with parallels in the patriarchal narratives. Thus Sarah's search for an heir by means of her maid Hagar, her legal casting out of Hagar on Isaac's birth, Abraham's adoption of Eliezer as his heir, Esau's contemptuous sell of his birthright, Laban's and Jacob's partnership, Rachel's attempt to confirm succession by the theft of the teraphim, and Isaac's irrevocable bestowal of the blessing are found in similar accounts in the Nuzi Tablets.

The Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran aide the Bible interpreter in recognizing the setting in which the New Testament was written. The revolt against urban religion from the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees is seen clearly in the of Qumran. The lives of the common people during the times of the Romans can be seen clearly in the Qumran scrolls and in the Gospels. There is a parallel between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospels that show the social and religious struggles during the times of Jesus.

2. Archaeological material of Apologetic value:

Archaeology has done much to validate the writings of the Bible. The names of cities now extinct, the names of persons of whom skeptics say never

existed, and the uncovering of places like Jericho and its toppled walls have helped to show that the Bible is a very reliable book of history. For instance:

Sodom and Gomorrah

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah has long been viewed as a legend. Critics assume that it was created to communicate moral principles. However, throughout the Bible this story is treated as a historical event. The Old Testament prophets refer to the destruction of Sodom on several occasions (Deut. 29:23, Isa. 13:19, Jer. 49:18), and these cities play a key role in the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles (Matt. 10:15, 2 Pet. 2:6 and Jude 1:7). What has archaeology found to establish the existence of these cities?

Archaeologists have searched the Dead Sea region for many years in search of Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 14:3 gives their location as the Valley of Siddim known as the Salt Sea, another name for the Dead Sea. On the east side six wadies, or river valleys, flow into the Dead Sea. Along five of these wadies, ancient cities were discovered. The northern most is named Bab edh-Drha. In 1924, renowned archaeologist Dr. William Albright excavated at this site, searching for Sodom and Gomorrah. He discovered it to be a heavily fortified city. Although he connected this city with one of the biblical “Cities of the Plains,” he could not find conclusive evidence to justify this assumption.

More digging was done in 1965, 1967, and 1973. The archaeologists discovered a 23-inch thick wall around the city, along with numerous houses and a large temple. Outside the city were huge grave sites where thousands of skeletons were unearthed. This revealed that the city had been well populated during the early Bronze Age, about the time Abraham would have lived. Most intriguing was evidence that a massive fire had destroyed the city. It lay buried under a coating of ash several feet thick. A cemetery one kilometer outside the city contained charred remains of roofs, posts, and bricks turned red from heat.

Dr. Bryant Wood, in describing these charnel houses, stated that a fire began on the roofs of these buildings. Eventually the burning roof collapsed into the interior and spread inside the building. This was the case in every house they excavated. Such a massive fiery destruction would match the biblical account that the city was destroyed by fire that rained down from heaven. Wood states, “The evidence would suggest that this site of Bab edh-Drha is the

biblical city of Sodom.”

Five cities of the plain are mentioned in Genesis 14: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zoar, and Zeboiim. Remnants of these other four cities are also found along the Dead Sea. Following a southward path from Bab edh-Drha there is the city called Numeria. Continuing south is the city called es-Safi. Further south are the ancient cities of Feifa and Khanazir. Studies at these cities revealed that they had been abandoned at the same time about 2450–2350 B.C. Many archaeologists believe if Bab ed-Drha is Sodom, Numeria is Gomorrah, and es-Safi is Zoar.

What fascinated the archaeologists is that these cities were covered in the same ash as Bab ed-Drha. Numeria, believed to be Gomorrah, had seven feet of ash in some places. In every one of the destroyed cities ash deposits made the soil a spongy charcoal, making it impossible to rebuild. According to the Bible, four of the five cities were destroyed, leaving Lot to flee to Zoar. Zoar was not destroyed by fire, but was abandoned during this period. Although archaeologists are still disputing these findings, this is one discovery we will be hearing more about in years to come.^[8]

Confirmation Regarding the Crucifixion

All four Gospels give details of the crucifixion of Christ. Their accurate portrayal of this Roman practice has been confirmed by archaeology. In 1968, a grave site in the city of Jerusalem was uncovered containing thirty-five bodies. Each of the men had died a brutal death which historians believe was the result of their involvement in the Jewish revolt against Rome in 70 A.D.

The inscription identified one individual as Yohan Ben Ha'galgol. Studies of the bones performed by osteologists and doctors from the Hadassah Medical School determined the man was twenty-eight years old, stood five feet six inches, and had some slight facial defects due to a cleft right palate.

What intrigued archaeologists were the evidences that this man had been crucified in a manner resembling the crucifixion of Christ. A seven-inch nail had been driven through both feet, which were turned outward so the nail could be hammered inside the Achilles tendon. Archaeologists also discovered that nails had been driven through his lower forearms. A victim of a crucifixion would have to raise and lower his body in order to breathe. To

do this, he needed to push up on his pierced feet and pull up with his arms. Yohan's upper arms were smoothly worn, indicating this movement.

John records that in order to expedite the death of a prisoner, executioners broke the legs of the victim so that he could not lift himself up by pushing with his feet (19:31-33). Yohan's legs were found crushed by a blow, breaking them below the knee. The Dead Sea Scrolls state that both Jews and Romans abhorred crucifixion due to its cruelty and humiliation. The scrolls also state it was a punishment reserved for slaves and any who challenged the ruling powers of Rome. This explains why Pilate chose crucifixion as the penalty for Jesus.

Relating to the crucifixion, in 1878 a stone slab was found in Nazareth with a decree from Emperor Claudius who reigned from 41–54 A.D. It stated that graves must not be disturbed nor bodies to be removed. The punishment on other decrees is a fine, but this one threatens death and comes very close to the time of the resurrection. This was probably due to Claudius investigating the riots of 49 A.D. He had certainly heard of the resurrection and did not want any similar incidents. This decree was probably made in connection with the Apostles' preaching of Jesus' resurrection and the Jewish argument that the body had been stolen.^[9]

Archaeology is therefore very valuable in the area of apologetics and has verified many things of which the skeptics have disclaimed.

3. The Dead Sea Scrolls and New Testament manuscripts.

In order to understand the text we must make sure we have the original text. Therefore we understand that the text of the Bible has not been transmitted to us free from scribal errors. This does not mean that there is any question concerning doctrine, but because of the material that the Old Testament was written on and because the Old Testament scribes would bury the older manuscripts after they copied them, then the oldest manuscripts that were possessed during the time of the translation of the King James Version dated to 900-1000 A.D. This manuscript was put together by the Massorettes. They took upon themselves the task of adding vowels to the manuscripts they possessed (this was because the Old Testament was written with words that contained no vowels) and they took upon themselves to separate the words.

For many years it was argued by skeptics that we do not know if the

Massorettes got the text right when they put together their manuscript. But then in 1947, in a cave at Qumran some manuscripts were found. These manuscripts contained most of the Old Testament and a copy and a half of the book of Isaiah. The book of Isaiah was almost identical to the Massorette text all but differences in spelling or grammar.

As for the New Testament we have over 24,900 manuscripts dating back within 25 years of the writings of the originals. When the New Testament was translated during the time of the King James translation, certain manuscripts we now possess was not known by the translators of that version. Therefore the science of “textual criticism” takes and examines all the text of the New Testament and pulls out of them the original text. This is very justifiable. Every student of the Bible must familiarize himself with the scriptures that have been accepted, due to being in our oldest manuscripts.

XII. WORKING THROUGH ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES

The serious Bible student will eventually run into someone who tries to make the claim that the Bible is full of contradictions and errors. The serious interpreter who holds and believes the Bible to be the Word of God will not be moved by these attacks, but will meet them head on, seeking a plausible answer to these claims.

- 1.** Seeking a harmonization to two seemingly contradictory scriptures is not wrong. If we can harmonize them, then there is no contradiction, but just because scriptures seem to contradict does not prove the doctrine in them to be false.
- 2.** When working through a seemingly contradictory set of passages be sure to study all the historical information that you can find on the events, places, etc . . . concerning these scriptures.
- 3.** Recognize that solutions to the contradictory set of passages exist in commentaries or works by other scholars who also have met with this passage.
- 4.** A lot of seemingly contradictions exist because of copyist errors when they copied the original manuscripts or they could be because of translation errors when the Bible was translated. Generally when one translates a word from one language to another, there are meanings that are lost or added to because there is no equivalent to that word in that other language.
- 5.** Remember that the Bible itself claims that there are some things in it that are hard to be understood (1 Corinthians 13:12; 2 Peter 2:16).
- 6.** We need to remember also that God wants us to seek him. This means that when we can't figure something out, then we go to him, he is the author of the Holy Scripture. This keeps us praying and seeking his face.
- 7.** We must also recognize that we are finite limited beings and God is infinite. Therefore, we will not know everything that scripture has to say. Yet we must not give up as if there could never be an answer to the scriptures that we are examining.

XIII. RECOMMENDED READING

Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950). An older, but generally reliable work on hermeneutics (Reformed).

R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977). An easy-to-read and practical guide for Bible interpretation (Reformed).

D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984). An outstanding work from a highly respected New Testament scholar who exposes many of the grammatical, logical, and historical fallacies which Bible interpreters make when handling Scripture.

FOOTNOTES:

- [1] *Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology* copyright 1967 by Baker Book House Company.
- [2] James Sire [Scripture Twisting page 12] material found in *Hermeneutics A Guide To basic Bible Interpretation* by Darryl M. Erkel (1999).
- [3] *The Holy Spirit and Hermeneutics* by Daniel B. Wallace, Ph.D. Associate Professor of New Testament Studies Dallas Theological Seminary wallace@bible.org.
- [4] *Hermeneutics A Guide To Basic Bible Interpretation* by Darryl M. Erkel (1999).
- [5] *The Holy Spirit and Hermeneutics* by Daniel B. Wallace, Ph.D. Associate Professor of New Testament Studies Dallas Theological Seminary wallace@bible.org.
- [6] *Hermeneutics A Guide To Basic Bible Interpretation* by Darryl M. Erkel (1999)
- [7] *Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology* copyright 1967 by Baker Book House Company.
- [8] Information found at www.biblearchaeology.org
- [9] *ibid.*

This paper was based mainly on “*Hermeneutics a Guide to Basic Bible Interpretation*” by Darryl M. Erkel. I used my own insights at divers places and also used several other references in order to write this paper.