

“Biblical Interpretation”
5-14-00

- I. Bottom line:
 - A. Textual Criticism: Which are the correct words?
 - B. Translation: What does it say? How do I properly translate it into my language?
 - C. Interpretation: What does it mean? Do I really understand it?
 - D. Application: How does it apply to me today?
- II. Elements of interpretation: We so often just understand passages as they were taught to us. We no longer know how to be critical, or to analyze. E.g., Romans 11:5.
 - A. Words:
 - 1. What do the words mean?
 - a. What is the semantic range of the word? Ex.: green: color, novice, good at growing, envious, money.
 - b. Can only have one meaning in the context. Ex. The green tree. He has a green thumb. He was green with envy.
 - c. Greek language in particular is very definitive: e.g., three words to express three meanings of the English word “love.”
 - 2. Don’t forget that there are three languages used in Scripture.
 - a. Hebrew.
 - b. Aramaic.
 - c. Greek.
 - d. Bridge the gaps with different lexicons: Englishman’s Hebrew Lexicon, Englishman’s Greek Lexicon.
 - B. Sentences:
 - 1. What kind of words are they? (grammar: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, participles, infinitives, etc.).
 - 2. How do the words work together? (syntax: tenses, moods, voice, relationships, etc.)
 - C. Contexts:
 - 1. Old Testament or New Testament:
 - a. Progressive revelation.
 - b. Types and shadows.
 - c. New Testament clearer (what is in the Old concealed is in the New revealed).
 - d. New Testament Theology.
 - e. Old Testament Theology.
 - 2. Author.
 - a. Different authors use words specifically.
 - b. Specific thought patterns.
 - c. Specific theologies (but none contradictory of other).

3. Book.
 - a. Specific vocabulary.
 - b. Specific topics.
 - c. Logic of a book, flow of argument.
4. Genre:
 - a. Historical books: General historical writings, e.g., Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Kings, Chronicles, Gospels, Acts. Expect straight forward accounting of details.
 - b. Poetical books: Highly structured, high degree of imagery, parallelism, e.g., Job, Psalms, Song of Solomon. (E.g., Job 3:3; Exodus 15:6-8).
 - c. Wisdom books: Also highly structured, parallelism, e.g., Proverbs, Ecclesiastes.
 - d. Prophetic books: High degree of symbolism, imagery, e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Minor Prophets, Revelation.
 - e. Epistolary books: More didactic, straight forward, e.g., Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, etc.
 - f. Parabolic literature: Jesus taught in parables. E.g., Matthew 13, Mark 4.
 - g. Many books are combinations. E.g., Matthew contains history, parables, prophecies, teaching, etc. Need to treat each part according to the kind of literature it is.
5. Culture:
 - a. Given in Hebrew culture, i.e., Middle East culture.
 - b. Translating into American culture, i.e., Western Culture.
 - c. Idioms need to be taken into account. E.g., American: cat out of the bag = letting out a secret; Hebrew: length of nose = patience.
6. Time frame:
 - a. Events took place between 2000 - 6000 years ago.
 - b. We live in the present.
7. Theological:
 - a. Biblical theology.
 - b. Systematic theology:
 - (i) The Bible won't contradict itself. It teaches only one unified system of theology.
 - (ii) The clearer passages should be used to interpret the obscure.
8. Audience:
 - a. Not everything addressed to everyone.
 - b. E.g., Matt. 10; John 14:26.
9. The specific context.
 - a. Don't take the meaning of the words as though they are spoken in another context, or take them out of context. (E.g., Scripture verse box).
 - b. Understand what the meaning is in its own context. E.g., "There is no god; Ps.

10:4; 14:1.

10. Let the Scriptures speak for themselves:
 - a. Let the clearer passage speak for the more obscure.
 - b. Scripture not contradict itself: e.g., 1 John 2:2/John 10; 2 Cor. 5:21.
 - c. Scripture is consistent with itself, therefore should interpret it so.

11. In ethical matters, take the stricter interpretation.
 - a. We are prone to sin, and therefore to take the easier route.

D. Covenant.

1. The Bible is a covenant document.
2. It is cast in the form of a Second Millennium Suzerainty Treaty: e.g., Exodus 20.
 - a. Preamble: Who the Suzerain is: I am the Lord thy God (20:2a). Whatever the Lord reveals concerning Himself.
 - b. Historic prologue: What he has done to ingratiate: Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery (v. 2b). The prophets kept an historical record to serve as a lawsuit document.
 - c. Stipulations: What they are to do: You shall have no other gods before Me. (Ten Commandments; vv. 3-17). All the commandments.
 - d. Sanctions: What they will get if you obey, what they will get if they disobey: Blessings for obedience, curses for disobedience. Honor your father and your mother, that you may live long in the land. He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death (Ex. 21:17).
 - e. Disposition: Where to put it and how often to take it out to read it.
 - f. When prosecuting covenant lawsuit, prophets would remind people what God had done, what they had done, how they had broken God's Law, what God was going to do because they had unless they repented, and urged them to turn back.