

Hermeneutics  
Maranatha Bible Church  
Woman's Training Course

# Hermeneutics

## Class #5

### Practice: Stage 3, Interpreting What the Text Says

Purpose of this stage of interpretation is to arrive at an understanding of all that has been observed up to this point.

*“Give me understanding, that I may observe they Law, and keep it with all my heart” (Psalm 119:34).*

## I. Nature of Interpretation

### A. Definition of Interpretation

- Establishing the intended meaning of what the author said.  
“What does the text mean by what it says?”
- There are essentially three types of reading:
  1. Reading for entertainment
  2. Reading for information
  3. Reading for understanding
- With each level comes the need for increased concentration.

OBSERVATION	<b>—————</b>	INTERPRETATION
(“reading” for the sake of information)		(“reading” for the sake of understanding)

### B. Purpose of Interpretation

- To enable someone to determine the intent of the author of Scripture. Must overcome obstacles such as:
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
  4. \_\_\_\_\_

## C. Principles of Interpretation

- Basic principles of interpretation include:
  1. Depend on divine assistance
  2. Seek authorial intent
  3. Interpret literally
  4. Pursue a single meaning
  5. Remember antecedent revelation
  6. Evaluate exegetical results

## II. Practice of Interpretation

### A. *Step #1: Interpreting the Words (Lexical Analysis)*

- There are three aspects to consider when studying the meaning of terms.
  1. **Study the Word *Etymologically***
    - As study of how the word came to mean what it now means. How it developed over time.<sup>1</sup>
- How to uncover the etymology of a word.
  - (a) An interlinear can be helpful to discover the Greek or Hebrew word behind the English word used.
  - (b) lexicons for the basic, root idea of the term.
  - (c) Consult a wordbook or theological dictionary for a discussion of the history of the word.
- 2. **Study the Word *Comparatively***
  - Terms may have varied semantic range
  - A comparative study will expose you to the different contexts in which that word is found.

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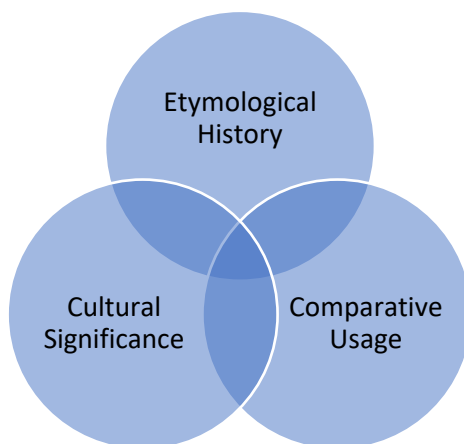
<sup>1</sup> Brad Klassen, *BI 505 Hermeneutics Class Notes* (Sun Valley CA: The Masters Seminary, 2017), 100.

- For this, use an exhaustive concordance to see every text in which the word is used. Note the context and likely nuance of the word in that context.
- Ask yourself how likely they are to convey the same nuance as the word you are studying.

### 3. Study the Word *Culturally*

- How to study a word culturally.
  - (a) Lexicons may provide a little help.
  - (b) Dictionaries and wordbooks.
  - (c) Good commentaries will provide much help.
  - (d) Historical books on manners and customs of the ancient world.<sup>2</sup>

## 3 Potential Components of a Word's Meaning



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<sup>2</sup> Brad Klassen, *BI 505 Hermeneutics Class Notes* (Sun Valley CA: The Masters Seminary, 2017), 103.

#### 4. Summarize Your Findings

- Define each term precisely within the particular context and provide support based on what you have learned in the study.
- How do we know if a word is figurative or not?

<b>Three Important Questions for Determining Figurative Language</b>
Does it possess a degree of absurdity when taken literally?
Does it possess a degree of clarity when taken symbolically?
Does it fall into an established category of symbolic language?

#### B. Step #2: Interpreting the Grammar (Syntactical Analysis)

- A study of the relationship between words in a sentence.

*Identify the significance of the relationships.*

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#### **Important tools to use for this step:**

Textbooks on grammar  
Exegetical commentaries  
Journal articles on Biblical grammar

*Solve Grammatical Ambiguity.*

- Sometimes there are several options for a given grammatical construction. If you cannot determine which one is correct through observation, dig deeper.

#### C. Step #3: Synthesize Findings

- Merge all of your findings into a single statement showing your understanding of the text.

**“Here is what the author means by what he says in this text: ...”**

- Explain the emphasis of the passage based on your research, discuss the flow and main point of the passage.

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<b>Stage #1 – Overview</b>	
<b>Understanding the Context of the Text</b>	
Step #1	Study the book’s historical context (outside of Bible)
Step #2	Study the book’s canonical context (whole Bible)
Step #3	Study the book’s central purpose (context of the book)
Step #4	Study the book’s major sections
Step #5	Study the text’s immediate context

<b>Stage #2 – Overview</b>	
<b>Making Observations From the Text</b>	
Step #1	Read the text prayerfully
Step #2	Read the text repeatedly
Step #3	Read understanding the parts of speech
Step #4	Read thoughtfully, asking questions
Step #5	Read purposefully, summarizing results

<b>Stage #3 – Overview</b>		
<b>Interpreting What the Text Says</b>		
Step #1	Study the Words	Etymologically
		Comparatively
		Culturally
Step #2	Study the Grammar	I.D. Key Constructions
		Research Significance
		Solve Ambiguity
Step #3	Synthesize Findings	

# Hermeneutics

## Class #6

### Practice: Stage 4, Applying What the Text Means

There is only one meaning to a text but there are several applications.

#### I. The Nature of Application

##### A. The Definition of Application

- Application is the “living out of the facts.”<sup>3</sup>

**Observation** – *What does the text say?*

**Interpretation** – *What does the text mean by what it says?*

**Application** – *What does the meaning of the text require of me?*

##### B. Why do so Many People Avoid Application?

- There are several reasons for this.
  1. They are satisfied to simply discover the meaning of the passage but go no further.
  2. Superficial application is preferred over substantive, life changing submission to God’s Word and application.
  3. That which is most convicting tends to be that which is most avoided.
  4. That which brings about the greatest emotional response is valued above that which brings about true change in will or character.
- As we study application, we need to take the time to delineate between “Descriptive” and “Prescriptive” passages.

<sup>3</sup> Brad Klassen, *BI 505 Hermeneutics Class Notes* (Sun Valley CA: The Masters Seminary, 2017), 118.

## II. Distinguishing Between the Descriptive and the Prescriptive

### A. Not all Scripture is Applicable to the Same degree

- Let's define descriptive texts and prescriptive texts.

**Descriptive texts:** Portions of Scripture which contain descriptions of events that took place or commands issued to specific individuals or people groups.

- **Examples:**

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**Prescriptive texts: (Normative)** Portions of Scripture which contain teachings, commands, or directions which are extended in their direct application to all people and places universally. <sup>4</sup>

- *How do we distinguish between the two?*
  - The best way to determine this is by looking at the following:
    1. The context of the passage.  
- This may limit the audience thus limit the application.
    2. Other biblical teachings or subsequent revelation.  
- These may limit or change application.

## III. Putting it all Into Practice

- Questions to ask to help us determine how to respond to the message of the text.
  - Is there a truth to believe about God?
  - Is there a truth to believe about some other doctrine?
  - Is there a command to obey?
  - Is there a promise to claim?
  - Is there an example to follow?
  - Is there an error in behavior to avoid?
  - Is there an error in thinking to avoid?

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<sup>4</sup> Brad Klassen, *BI 505 Hermeneutics Class Notes* (Sun Valley CA: The Masters Seminary, 2017), 123.



- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a principle to follow for personal guidance?
- Is the wisdom to shape a Christians thinking?
- Is there a prayer to pattern?

#### **IV. Summary Steps for Application**

- 1.) True application comes only when the student relies upon the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18). The application process must therefore start with prayer.
- 2.) Biblical truth is not applied until it is believed and lived out. The student must always study Scripture in order to be transformed in his thinking and in his behavior.
- 3.) Avoid treating the Bible like a “magical” book. Resist the temptation to quickly flip to passages in order to find quick and easy answers. True application comes only after careful interpretation. To by-pass the hard work of interpretation only results in misapplication and confusion.
- 4.) Determine if the text is directly applicable to you. Watch carefully for context and original recipients. This also requires a sensitivity to progressive revelation (be sure to examine what other passages in Scripture which deal with the same issue have to say).
- 5.) Make sure that thorough exegesis has taken place before moving to the application stage. If interpretation is done well, application will flow out naturally and easily. If not, a cloud of confusion may exist over how the meaning of the passage is to be applied.
- 6.) Application must be related to interpretation. Students sometimes show great diligence in interpreting a text, but then apply it in a way that is not in harmony with the text’s meaning.
- 7.) It should be remembered that the application of a text should not go beyond what the text says. If a passage comments on an issue only to a point, do not press the application of that passage beyond that degree.

- 8.) Be careful to distinguish between that which is merely descriptive (that which merely describes an event, person, etc.) and that which is normative (that which is to be followed by all people everywhere). That David had several wives is a fact that Scripture records about David—it is not a principle to be followed by believers. However, God’s command to Adam in Genesis 2:24, with respect to marriage is normative—that is, it is to be the guiding principle for believers in marriage.
- 9.) Applications should be made to one’s life immediately. The longer change is avoided, the harder one will grow towards change. <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Brad Klassen, *BI 505 Hermeneutics Class Notes* (Sun Valley CA: The Masters Seminary, 2017), 124-125.