

Wednesday Bible Study
 January 12, 2021
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Biblical Hermeneutics: How to Interpret Christian Scripture
 (Session One)

Biblical Hermeneutics

The study of the principles of interpretation concerning the books of the Bible. In other words, it's the methods we use to understand what God has said through his Word, which leads us to the correct application of those truths today.

1. The Nature of Christian Scripture

- a. **Bible:** The Bible is not an ordinary book. It reads like an ordinary book, it's accessible to us in our language, but the Bible is unlike any book ever written – or will be written – because it's the only book that has been written by God.
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*
 - 2 Peter 1:21 – *“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*
- b. **Characteristics:**
 - **Inspired:** The Bible came directly from God.
 - **Inerrant:** The Bible contains no errors.
 - **Infallible:** The Bible will always lead us to God's truth.
 - **Sufficient:** The Bible alone is all we need to know God and live in obedience.
 - **Necessary:** The Bible is completely necessary to know God and live in obedience.
 - **Authoritative:** The Bible is our final authority for truth.
- c. **Belgic Confession** (1561) – *“He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation.”* (Article 2, cont.)

- d. **The Baptist Faith & Message** (2000) – *“The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”* (Art 1, “The Scriptures”)
- e. **Importance for Hermeneutics:** Why are we beginning a study of hermeneutics by discussing the Nature of Scripture? Unless we understand the true nature of the Bible, we will never be able to approach it, study it, interpret it, and apply it correctly.
- **We approach the Bible with complete seriousness, honor and reverence.** This means that when we read the Bible, we are listening to God speak.
 - **We spend adequate time in our study.** We don't rush or skim through it, but read and study with a desire to hear God and discover what he wants us to know.
 - **We are extremely careful to interpret and understand the Bible correctly.** The last thing we want to do is misunderstand or misapply the Bible.
 - **We are quick to believe and obey what the Bible teaches.** Don't make the mistake of the man in James who hears but doesn't obey – it's a major deception.

2. The Necessity of Prayer

- a. **Supernatural:** As we have already noted, the Bible is a supernatural book that has been given to us by God through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Bible is not just information or stories collected on pages, like an encyclopedia or novel. The Bible is a book that unleashes great power to change our lives. Scripture is a means of God's grace, where he gives us knowledge, wisdom, instruction, guidance, warnings, and encouragements. As we read what the Holy Spirit has inspired to be written, the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts and God works in our lives.
- Hebrews 4:12 – *“For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*
 - Isaiah 55:11 – *“So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”*
 - John 17:17 – *“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”*

- Romans 10:17 – *“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”*
- b. **Prayer:** However, because of our sinful flesh and ability to be self-deceived, we are unable to read and understand Scripture without the assistance of God. This is why we must pray before we open our Bibles. We must ask God to open our hearts and minds, and speak to us through the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, we won’t be able to listen to God and understand his will.
 - 1 Corinthians 2:14 – *“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand [see] them because they are spiritually discerned”*
 - John 16:14 – *“He [Holy Spirit] will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”*
 - Luke 24:45 – *“And he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”*
 - Psalm 119:18 – *“Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of your law.”*