

Review- Hermeneutics- the science of Biblical interpretation

What are some basic principles of interpreting the Bible?

1. Let Scripture interpret scripture (*Sacra Scriptura sui interpres- Sacred Scripture is its own interpreter*)-
2. The Bible should be interpreted literally, i.e. as a piece of literature
3. Let scripture speak for itself (Grammatico-historical)- original intended meaning

Interpretation Hourglass

Context- What is going on in the world right now?

Structure- Where are we at in the timeline of the Bible?

Details- What does this particular verse/passage tell us?

I. Poetry

•Poetry is contained in most of the books of the Bible. It is interspersed throughout the books of prophecy, the gospels, the book of the law, and even the epistles of Paul. While it is a part of all of these genres, its main concentration is in the center section of the Bible, called the Writings, or Wisdom literature, or the books of poetry. This includes Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

What is the Purpose of Poetry?

Engages the imagination, goes beyond the simple facts to make the reader understand the depth of something (emotionally, physically, spiritually), an explanation of the abstract-*feelings and ideas*

We are to feel what the author is feeling as we engage (very similar to music, art, etc.)

•Today we aren't going to look exhaustively at every aspect of interpreting poetry, but we will look at a few helpful things that you can notice as you read through the Psalms, or when you encounter poetic writing elsewhere in the Bible. The first thing we'll look at in regards to Poetry is the meaning of words.

A. How do we find the meaning of words and phrases?

1. Etymology- We look at the word itself and perhaps grab a dictionary to see what that word means. For instance, hippopotamus comes from two Greek words which mean horse and river, so if we put them together we get a basic idea of what a Hippo is, a river horse.

- But this is a very limited method when it comes to poetry and common speech. Over time, words can change in meaning. Some words might mean one thing, and then common usage of the words begins to redefine what it really means. Take the word gay. 30 years ago, it meant happy. Now it has a completely different meaning. So we have to take more into account before we define what a word means.

2. Customary Usage- This is more typical of how we would define a word. We take it in the context of the surrounding words and phrases and then define it. So a word like hot could mean a high temperature, an attractive person, or a stolen car depending on how it is used.

- When we approach poetry, we are encountering a lot of symbols and metaphors to describe something. We read phrases like, “Your face shines, “ or “Your hair is like a flock of goats” and we have to ask what is really meant by these statements.

- EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF THE ORIGINAL READER*

-Song of Songs 6:5-6 – so we have to factor in what the original reader had going on in his or her background in order to truly understand what is being said. It would be like us saying, Your voice is like the Temptations. 2,000 years from now a reader might think we meant that their voice was leading us to sin or break the law, not knowing that the temptations were actually a group of singers.

-So, how do we find out these contextual things? How do we know what the customary usage was at the time it was written? A good study Bible or commentary would be a place to start. We can also look at the surrounding phrases to get a better idea of what the author was intending.

-If it's in the context of a love poem, then the thing said is probably complimentary rather than a bad thing, so we can assume that comparing someone's hair to goats was a good thing back then.

B. Parallelism in Poetry

Sproul- Parallelism may be defined as a relationship between two or more sentences or clauses that correspond in similarity or are set with each other. i.e. two or more phrases that relate to each other in some way.

1. Synonymous- a phrase repeated in a different way to emphasize a point (most common form)

A false witness will not go unpunished,
and he who breathes out lies will not escape. Prov 19:5 (ESV)

Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! Psalms 95:6 (ESV)

•These phrases define themselves. The first line tells us about the second and the second tells us about the first. They both give us a greater understanding of the bigger picture they both point to.

2. Antithetic- phrases that speak the same truth, one in a positive way, and one in a negative, like opposite sides of a coin

A wise son hears his father's instruction,
but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke Prov 13:1 (ESV)

A slack hand causes poverty,
but the hand of the diligent makes rich. Prov 10:4 (ESV)

3. Synthetic- this builds on a basic idea into the climactic statement of truth, like a staircase going up

For behold, your enemies, O Lord,
for behold, your enemies shall perish;
all evildoers shall be scattered. Psalms 92:9 (ESV)

Look Together at Psalm 89

•There is parallelism everywhere in poetry. There is this building an idea, a repeating of a theme so that what is developed in the mind of the reader is a crisp image of what is being talked about.

II. Proverbs

← Practical ways to use in OT
- Prayer
- Journal
- Personalizing

- An important thing to understand about proverbs and proverbial saying is that they aren't promises, they are principles. Proverbs convey ideas that, if we follow them, things will probably turn out as they say, but that isn't guaranteed. Just as we must always again consider the context a proverb is being used in. Again, they are generally true principles, but are not absolute promises. Here are a few examples.

The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.

⁴ A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

Prov 10:3-4 (ESV)

-We know that these two statements are generally true, but not absolutely.

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Prov 15:1 (ESV)

- Again, this is true in principle, but if you have a terrorist ready to blow up a building, I'm not sure a soft answer would do a whole lot of good.

- I'm not saying that scripture isn't true or useful, only that we have to understand the genre that we are in. Proverbs is full of principles for wise living, not promises for having success at everything we do.

- Proverbs, and really all poetry, is full of writing that uses metaphors to make a point as well. We have to understand that when the Psalmist in Psalm 69 says the flood water are up to his neck and that he is sinking in deep mire, he is speaking about an emotional and perhaps even a physical situation he is in where he needs deliverance, not a literal time of drowning in an ocean.

-I'll end this section with a last verse from Proverbs:

The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures.

Prov 30:17 (ESV)

- Again, a principle, not a promise.

Table Psalm to look at: Psalm 100

What kind of parallelism is there? Go this Psalm and mark down the parallelisms, either synonymous, antithetic, or synthetic

What can we learn from this Psalm?