

Foundations for Biblical Interpretation: The Method of Christ

- The challenge we face: Where do you get your ideas for how to interpret?
- The Bible needs interpretation. When we read to understand, we are reading through a hermeneutical grid. It matters how we teach ourselves. Just consider the simple passages that gives emphasis to the gift of teaching.

Acts 8:30-31 "So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him."

1 Corinthians 12:28 "And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers..."

Ephesians 4:11 "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers..."

Romans 12:7 "...if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching..."

- The Bible speaks of teachers and teaching. As we seek to understand God's word on his terms, we want to understand it in the way he intends for it to be taught it.



How does God interpret his word?

Luke 24:25-27

"...And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he **interpreted** to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

Luke 24:44-47

"Then he **opened** their minds to **understand** the Scriptures."

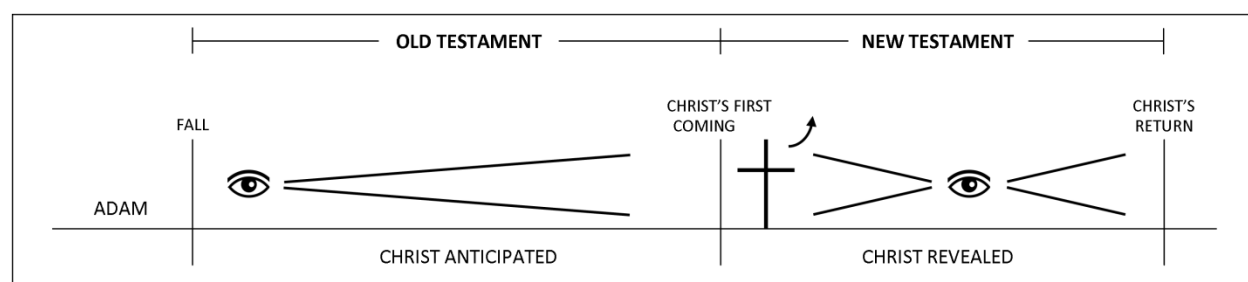
- The Holy Spirit also provides interpretation, as Jesus promised to the disciples. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will **guide** you into all the truth" (John 16:13).
- *Guiding* (GK: ὁδηγήσει) is a hermeneutical function (see also Acts 8:26-40).

Acts 26:22-23

- The basic principle is this: We will correctly understand the Scriptures as we imitate Jesus' understanding of the Scriptures. The way in which Jesus interprets the Scriptures is the *only* right way to interpret the Scriptures.
- Since God is not divided against himself we have confidence that Christ perfectly interprets the Scriptures. There is no distance between God the primary author of the Scriptures and the Son of God who interprets them.

- The Bible then testifies that the regulating hermeneutic for understanding is centered around who Jesus is and what he has done. The central focus of all the Scriptures is *Christ-centered*. God's word is ultimately about the gospel of Jesus.
- As we align our hermeneutic to this, we help lead ourselves and others not only into the gospel but what it produces: A conforming to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29).
- If God's word is truly his word, then our thoughts and actions must revolve around what he has to say, and *how* he says it. "Hermeneutic approaches that fail to see the light of Christ in the letter of the text short-circuit the divine authorial intent...To fail to see the light of Christ in the letter of the text is to do the letter an injustice."¹

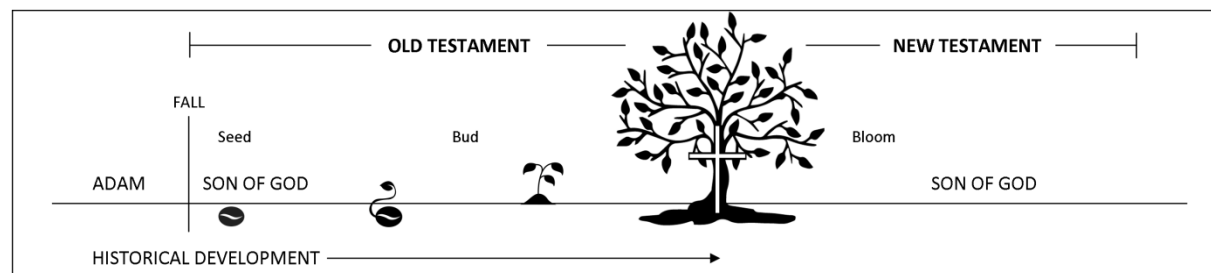
SEEING THE CROSS: The Organic Unity of the Parts



[Diagram 1: Keep your eyes on the person and work of Christ]

- We want to have our eyes always on the gospel wherever we are in Scripture (Diagram 1).
- If we are in the Old Testament, we have *Christ-Anticipated*. As the history of redemption advances, we receive greater clarity as to the details of the coming Messiah and his work.
- If we are in the New Testament, we have *Christ-Revealed*. The anticipation in the Old reaches its climactic fulfillment in the coming of Christ, who establishes his kingdom in fullness by means of his life, death, and resurrection (the gospel).
- Believers today look back to this revealed work even as we continue to anticipate the return of Christ.

The History of Redemption: The Organic Unity in the Parts



[Diagram 2: The History of Redemption]

¹ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics: Transfiguring What it Means to Read the Bible Theologically* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2024), 359.

- *The History of Redemption* can be visually compared to the organism of a tree (Diagram 2).
- In the garden, God creates a son (Adam). He receives authority over the creation with stipulations. He breaks those stipulations, yet in Genesis 3:15 a seed of promise is planted. We are told a seed from the woman (an heir - Son) would crush the serpent's head though he (the Seed) would be bruised.
- Seed is like a seed whose substance doesn't change even as it's destined to become a tree in its fullest form.
- All the "unseen" benefits of the gospel are there inwardly for Adam and Eve (they have faith in the promise which that seed represents to them). Externally, the gospel is yet to be in full bloom (which will be Christ revealed in person as the God-man incarnate!).
- The promise to our first-parents (Adam & Eve) after the fall in Genesis 3 is as much the gospel in substance as the very gospel that we believe today. Adam and Eve believed by faith that one day in the future God would provide the sole offspring who would crush the serpent's head so that they would have life – the substance was the same but the sign was different.
- Hebrews 11:13 "they died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar."
- An Old Testament believer possessed the outward promises, types, and shadows that all pointed to their substance: *Christ who is coming*. A New Testament believer no longer looks to those same promises, types, and shadows because we now have the substance: *Christ-revealed*. Everything in the Old Testament is directly fulfilled in the person and work of Christ. In the Old Testament everything points to Jesus in some manner. Our task over this course is to learn how to read in the same Christ-centered manner of our Lord and Savior.

Sample Text: Luke 4:1-13

Luke 4:1-13 Summary

Jesus answers with God's word alone. Jesus is the incarnate-word who relies on nothing of creation to remain faithful while under temptation. Adam, the son of God, failed to uphold God's word and resist the temptation of the serpent. In Exodus, God led Israel his "firstborn son" (4:22-23) into the wilderness to worship Him, to humble and to test them to see what was in his heart. God wanted to make Israel know that man does not live on bread alone (Deut. 8:2-3). However, Israel grumbled and wanted to return to slavery. Now, we learn how Jesus, as the true and greater Adam and the true and greater Israel is victorious over sin and over our great adversary Satan as the true Son of God (the second Adam). Jesus, unlike Adam *and* Israel, is tempted but doesn't fail. His surroundings (a barren desert in the presence of Satan himself) are much more difficult than those of Adam and Israel. Yet what Adam and Israel failed to do; Jesus in Luke 4 succeeds. Is he the promised offspring of the woman (Gen 3:15)?!

It should be no surprise that Luke the historian follows the hermeneutical pattern of Jesus' teaching in his own writing of his two-volume work.