

# Hermeneutic Study

## Agenda: Basics on Approaching the Bible

- Why Interpretation is Important
- The Bible is the Foundation
- General Understanding for Interpretation
- Examples
- Contextual Analysis

### Introduction:

*“Scripture is the foundation of the Church: the Church is the guardian of Scripture. When the Church is in strong health, the light of Scripture shines bright; when the Church is sick, Scripture is corroded by neglect; and thus it happens, that the outward form of Scripture and that of the Church, usually seem to exhibit simultaneously either health or else sickness; and as a rule the way in which Scripture is being treated is in exact correspondence with the condition of the Church.” John Albert Bengel*

### Introduction:

*“Many small groups meet weekly in homes or in churches to discuss the Bible – what it means and how it applies. Do people in those groups always come away with the same understanding of the passage studied? Not necessarily. Some may say, ‘to me this verse means this,’ and another person in the group may respond, ‘to me the verse doesn’t mean that; it means this.’ Studying the Bible in this way, without proper hermeneutical guidelines, can lead to confusion and interpretations that are even in direct conflict.” Roy Zuck*

*“The Church and the Scripture stand or fall together. Either the Church will be nourished and strengthened by the bold proclamation of her Biblical texts or her health will be severely impaired.” Walter Kaiser*

### Introduction:

*“It sometimes seems almost anything can be proved by the Bible, for there is scarcely a religion, sect, or cult in Christendom that does not use Scripture texts to “prove” its doctrine. In that respect the Bible may well be the most abused book in the world. The solution to this problem is not to be found alone in a correct view of inspiration, important as that is. Origen (A.D. 185-254), for example, held a high view of the inspiration of Scripture and yet was guilty of mishandling the Bible by minimizing its literal meaning and treating it as one vast allegory with many hidden meanings. The solution to this problem of widely differing interpretations is to employ the correct method of biblical interpretation.” Donald Campbell*

### Why interpretation is important....

- The practice of polygamy
  - Using sanitation thwarts the will of God
  - Putting witches to death is commanded
  - Legalism
  - Loaning money is immoral
  - Using pain relief methods in childbirth is immoral
  - Tithing at 10% is a law for the church
  - Take communion from a single cup
  - Foot washing
  - Infant baptism
  - The modern tongues movement
  - Arminianism
  - Self fulfillment theology (prosperity gospel)
  - All cults
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## Why interpretation is important....

- Understanding:
  - ❑ Who God is
  - ❑ What is wrong with man
  - ❑ What is true salvation
  - ❑ What is pleasing to God
  - ❑ What is true worship
  - ❑ What doctrines are important
  - ❑ What is the focus of the Bible
  - ❑ What is the purpose of man
  - ❑ What the future holds
  - ❑ How the OT relates to the NT
  - ❑ How to conduct evangelism

## Why interpretation is important....

- The Bible receives lots of attention:

*Unfortunately this is the world we live it...*

Nothing more maligned, ignored, questioned, distorted, misunderstood, mishandled, despised, rejected, denounced, destroyed, misquoted, misinterpreted, considered impractical, untrustworthy, or considered inadequate, out-of-step, old-fashion, and antiquated.

**All of it is related to inappropriate appreciation, followed by poor interpretation!**

## Why interpretation is important....

- Ramifications:
  - ❑ God diminished and ultimately removed from the Church
  - ❑ Evangelism wrongly practiced or not at all
  - ❑ The proliferation of false religion
  - ❑ The breakdown of righteous values
  - ❑ A progressive twisting followed by rejection of truth
  - ❑ God's name and glory profaned
  - ❑ Existentialism and humanism
  - ❑ The judgment of God
  - ❑ Persecution of saints
  - ❑ Unrighteous rulers
  - ❑ The breakdown and collapse of society



## Why interpretation is important....

- So then:
  - ❑ 2 Timothy 2:15 – Commanded & demanded
  - ❑ We are responsible and accountable to know the truth presented in God’s Word.
  - ❑ Without proper biblical interpretation, the theology of an individual or of an entire Church will be misdirected, superficial, or false.
  - ❑ Studying the Bible is a lifelong process and responsibility – it is required for ongoing warfare.
  - ❑ Without a personal correct understanding of the Bible, each individual will not know how to evaluate the message presented, or the ministry.
  - ❑ Without discernment a ministry can be taken over by apostasy and become the enemy of God.

### Introduction:

#### Definition of Hermeneutics:

*“Hermeneutics is the science and art of Biblical interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation.”*

Bernard Ramm

#### There are two major needs in hermeneutics:

- To ascertain or understand what God has communicated in the Holy Scriptures.
  - To bridge the gap between the minds of the Biblical writers (ultimately the mind of God) and our minds – as God has used men & their circumstances to communicate.
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## The Bible is the Foundation....

- The Inspiration of the Bible:
  - The superintending of God over human authors to write the very Word of God in the original manuscripts.
  - It is the work of God – Ephesians 3:3-5; Heb 1:1-2; 2:3-4
  - It is unique in:
    - Origin – 2 Peter 1:20-21
    - Survival – 1 Peter 1:24
    - Claims – 1 Thess 2:13; Matthew 5:18
    - Ability – Heb 4:12; Jms 1:17; Jhn 8:31-32; 17:17; Rom 10:17
    - Inseparability to Christ – John 1:1
  - It cannot be improved:
    - Final – Jude 3; Eph 2:20; Rev 22:18
    - Adequate – 2 Timothy 3:16-17
  - Inspiration guarantees its accuracy
    - In fulfillment – Mat 5:17-18; Lk 24:44-46
    - It's completeness – Rev 22:18-19

## The Bible is the Foundation....

- The illumination of the Bible:
  - The process by which the Holy Spirit enables a person to understand the things of God.
  - The need:
    - Blindness of natural man – 2 Cor 4:3-4; Job 37:19; John 3:19
    - The growth struggle of the Christian – Mat 16:13-14; Heb 5:11-14
    - The solution – 1 Cor 29-14; Eph 4:11-12; 1 John 2:27; 2 Cor 3:15-18
  - There is no other way to God, and the way to God is not a casual task: Mat 7:13-14; Phil 2:12; 1 Pet 1:3-9
  - The hindrance is deceivers – Titus 1:10; 2 John 1:7; Jude (entirety)
  - The antidote is the Word – 2 Timothy 3:13-15
  - The Church is the responsible steward of the Bible – 1 Tim 3:15, and the contender of the faith – Jude 1-2

# The Bible is the Foundation....

- The Integration of the Bible:
  - The Canon of Scripture – Canon means “a rule or measuring rod.”
    - It is the 39 books of the OT, and 27 of the NT
    - These books are exclusively God’s Word
  - The criteria for the NT:
    - Either written by an Apostle or close associate
    - Content met standard of appropriate truthful subject matter consistent with all other books
    - Acceptance by early Fathers of the Church
    - Unmistakable evidence of Divine Inspiration
  - The confirmation:
    - The authentication by an apostle or writer in another book.
    - The authentication of the OT – Jhn 10:34-35; Lke 11:51; 24:24
    - The pre-authentication of the NT – Jhn 14:26; 16:12-13
    - The preservation of the Canon – 1 Pet 1:22-25; Lke 16:17

## The Bible is the Foundation....

- The Integrity of the Bible:
  - The Bible is Infallible – which means it is unfailingly accurate (without error) in the original manuscripts.
  - The Bible is inerrant – which means it does not contain any error in a statement of fact – it is incapable of teaching deception.
  - It is verbal – every word is inspired by God.
  - It is plenary – all parts are equally inspired by God.
- The Bible is to be trusted absolutely, completely, unquestionably, and unreservedly.
  - It alone is the source all final authority and thinking.
  - The importance of trust - God's promise – Isa 66:2
  - Knowing the Bible brings the highest benefits possible in this life – wisdom, joy, & peace – Ps 119

### Initial issues for interpretation....

- The beginning point and continuing point of all interpretation is absolute confidence in the truthfulness of the Bible (in its original language) – Acts 17:10-11
  - The Bible is the authority whether the interpreter can understand the message or not.
  - If the message cannot be understood, the problem is not the Bible, the problem is with the interpreter.
  - The interpreter must prayerfully use all possible resources to understand the true meaning of the message.
- Understanding of the Bible is related to relationship with God, and therefore the work of the Spirit – John 10:26-27; 1 Cor 2:14; John 8:43; 2 Pet 3:16
  - Understanding of the Bible does not come all at once, it is a matter of continuing growth – John 12:16; 13:7; Acts 8:30; 1 Pet 2:2; 2 Pet 3:18
  - Understanding requires serious effort – 1 Tim 2:15

### Initial issues for interpretation....

- The interpreter needs a savvy general understanding of Progressive Revelation:
  - The manner in which God has revealed Himself has been a process of evolution in the cultural and religious sphere.
  - A broad understanding of the role of each of the 66 books.
  - How each book relates to the whole.
  - The promises of God and how they relate to progression.
- The interpreter needs a convicted understanding of basic doctrines:
  - The purpose of God
  - The attributes of God, His character, His sovereignty
  - The fall of man, man's condition in sin, salvation by grace
- The interpreter must accurately apply general truths - the Bible's reliance, the role of the books, progressive revelation, basic doctrine, the understanding of God, understanding of man, and salvation by grace practically to every interpretation.
  - This is not the same as preconceived non-biblical ideas
  - The interpreter knows the Scripture will not violate these truths



## Initial issues for interpretation....

- Other General Qualifications:
  - Reverence and interest in God's Word.
  - A willingness to subject the mind & thinking to God's Word (willingness to explore what the Word says and change if convinced by the Word).



The Word is the key – not preconceptions, emotions, wishful thinking, denominations, creeds, old saints, other saints, popular preachers, or sincerity – all of which may and generally does flow from neglect of the Word and poor interpretation!

### Initial issues for interpretation....

- Recognition the Bible is a human book:
  - It was recorded in a written language by men, and followed normal, grammatical meanings, including figurative language. It was immediately understandable in its original context.
  - The men that wrote it were seeking to make sense not nonsense.
  - As the intention of the writer was to write something meaningful, the concept of making the passage mean whatever is rejected.
  - The writing was written to specific hearers in a specific historical , geographical setting, for a specific purpose.
  - The Bible is affected and influenced by the cultural environment from which each human writer wrote.
  - Each biblical writing was understood in the light of its context.

Example: “He is over the hill”

- He made it over the top of the hill
- He is descending
- He is beyond middle life
- He is making progress
- He is at a specific point known to those he is addressing

### Initial issues for interpretation....

- Recognition the Bible is a Divine book:
  - The Bible because it is a Divine book has unity.
    - This means that whether OT or NT there is no contradiction
    - This means that what God was doing at any time must make sense in relation to everything else in the Word.
    - This means that the interpreter can clarify the meaning of one passage from parallel concepts, principles, and truth in other passages.
  - The context most often interprets itself.
    - As there is a theme of progress in revelation (meaning later Scriptures purposely build on earlier portions) the interpreter must recognize the position of the context in relation to the whole progress of the Bible.
      - It does not mean that revelation has evolved into something different.
      - It does not mean that early revelation is contradicted by late revelation.
      - It means that as it has progressed, additional truth and clarity has come.
      - It does mean that some of God's commands had a purpose that has now been superseded.
      - It does not mean the interpreter can take a later passage to change the original meaning of an earlier passage.
      - It does mean later passages should be understood considering the building blocks of earlier truth, taking into account the consistent themes of the Bible, and the distinctions of God's method of revelation during the progressive plan.

### Initial issues for interpretation....

- The need to understand progressive revelation.
  - The ultimate goal of history is for God to glorify Himself (Ps 72:18-19).
  - The Bible repeatedly shows God's sovereign rule (Ps 97:1-6) and purpose in history even using Satan's attempt to thwart & mankind's rebellion.
  - God has used different methods to reveal Himself throughout history (Heb 1:1-2):
    - Directly to Adam & Eve, Enoch, and Abraham
    - Through the Prophet Moses to Israel under a theocracy & through laws
    - Through His Son at His first coming
    - Through His Word exclusively in the NT Church age
  - For contextual interpretation, there is a need to recognize and understand God's different revelation arrangements in history – ie: different administrations (Eph 1:10; 3:9) or dispensations.
  - The character of God, His general purposes, His means of salvation, nor His ultimate goal does not change through these distinctions – only His method of revelation.
  - Historic administrations each have a beginning and ending in failure, with the expectation and unifying principle exclusively pointing to the promise of Christ as the non-failing eternal ruler, who receives all glory, and worship (Rev 5).

### Initial issues for interpretation....

“But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith that was later to be revealed. Therefore the law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come we are no longer under a tutor.” Gal 3:23-25

“It is not fitting, they say, that God, always self-consistent, should permit such a great change, disapproving afterward what He had once commanded and commended. I reply that God ought not to be considered changeable merely because He accommodated diverse forms to different ages, as He knew would be expedient for each. If a farmer sets certain tasks for his household in the winter, other tasks for the summer, we shall not on this account accuse him of inconstancy, or think that he departs from the proper rule of agriculture, which accords with the continuous order of nature. In like manner, if a householder instructs, rules, and guides his children one way in infancy, another way in youth, and still another in young manhood, we shall not on this account call him fickle and say that he abandons his purpose. Why, then, do we brand God with the mark of inconstancy because He has with apt and fitting marks distinguished a diversity of times”

John Calvin

### Initial issues for interpretation....

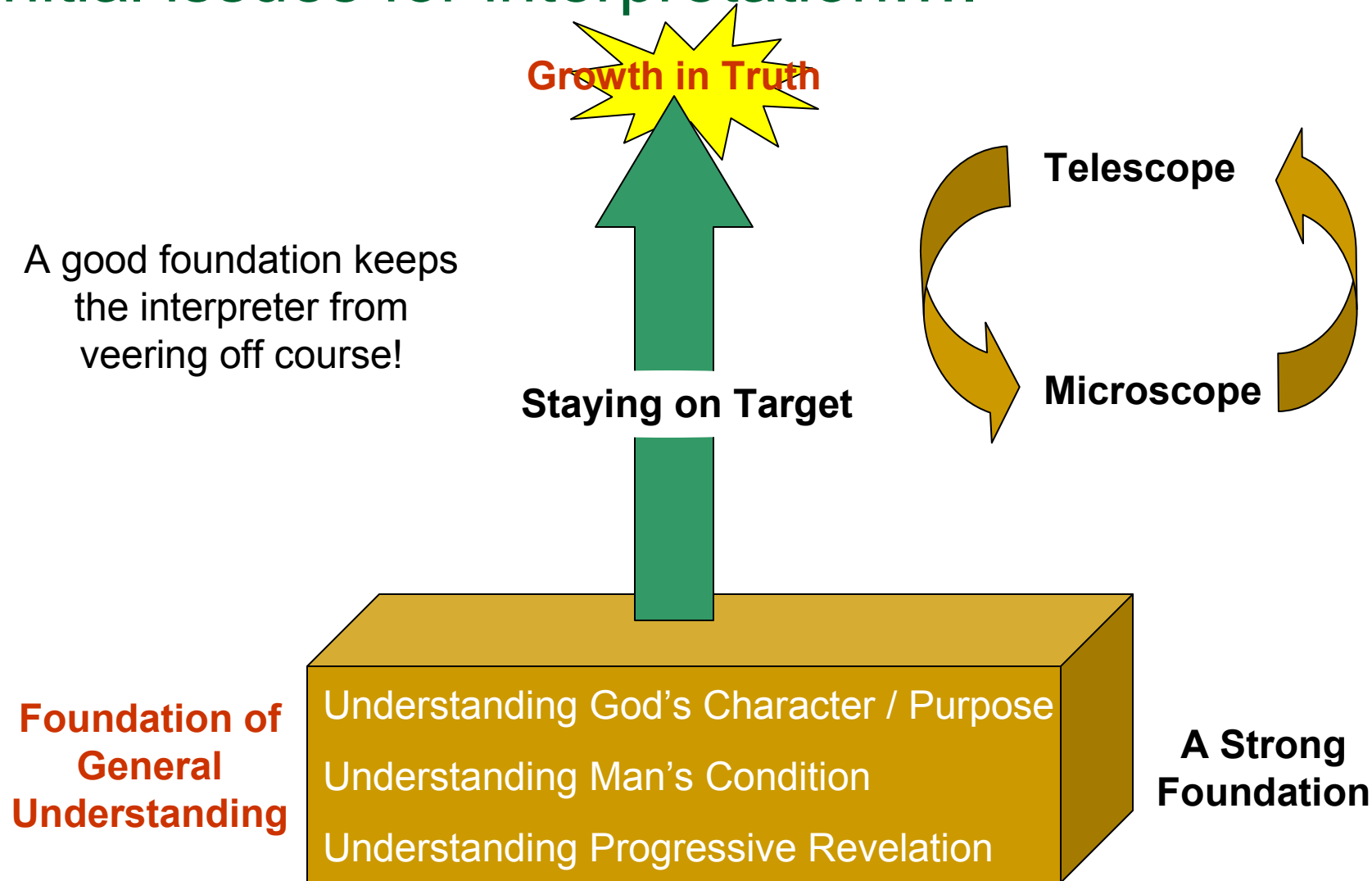
- The interpreter must take administrations into account as this is the larger Bible context:
  - If the directive or circumstance in a context of a specific administration is arbitrarily brought into another administration in which it does not fit it will cause confusion and poor doctrine.
  - If the meaning and purpose of the first context is missed resulting in poor understanding, and it supports the second context, the meaning in the second context will be skewed resulting in poor doctrines and practices.
  - The circumstances of God's revelation in OT history was a progressive unveiling of Himself appropriate and purposeful for the time and situation of history in that specific context.
  - There is a need to understand the original type, purpose, and recipients of OT covenants.
  - If major contextual divisions in the Word are not defined, distinguishing commands and instructions given Israel from those given the Church, a resulting dilemma occurs on how they apply to the church, as this becomes subjective it leads to poor doctrines and practices.
  - There is a need to understand the law's relation to grace, and recognize that much of the writings in the New Testament epistles are actually written to sort this out.
  - There is the need to understand the special binding relationship God chose to have with Israel, and that Israel even yet has a future in the plan of God.

### Example of crossing administrations:

“The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts. (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Luke 4:16; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Matt. 12:1-12; Ex. 31:13-17; Eze. 20:12, 20; Deut. 5:12-15; Heb. 4:1-11; Lev. 23:32; Mark 1:32.)” **From the Seventh Day Adventist Website**

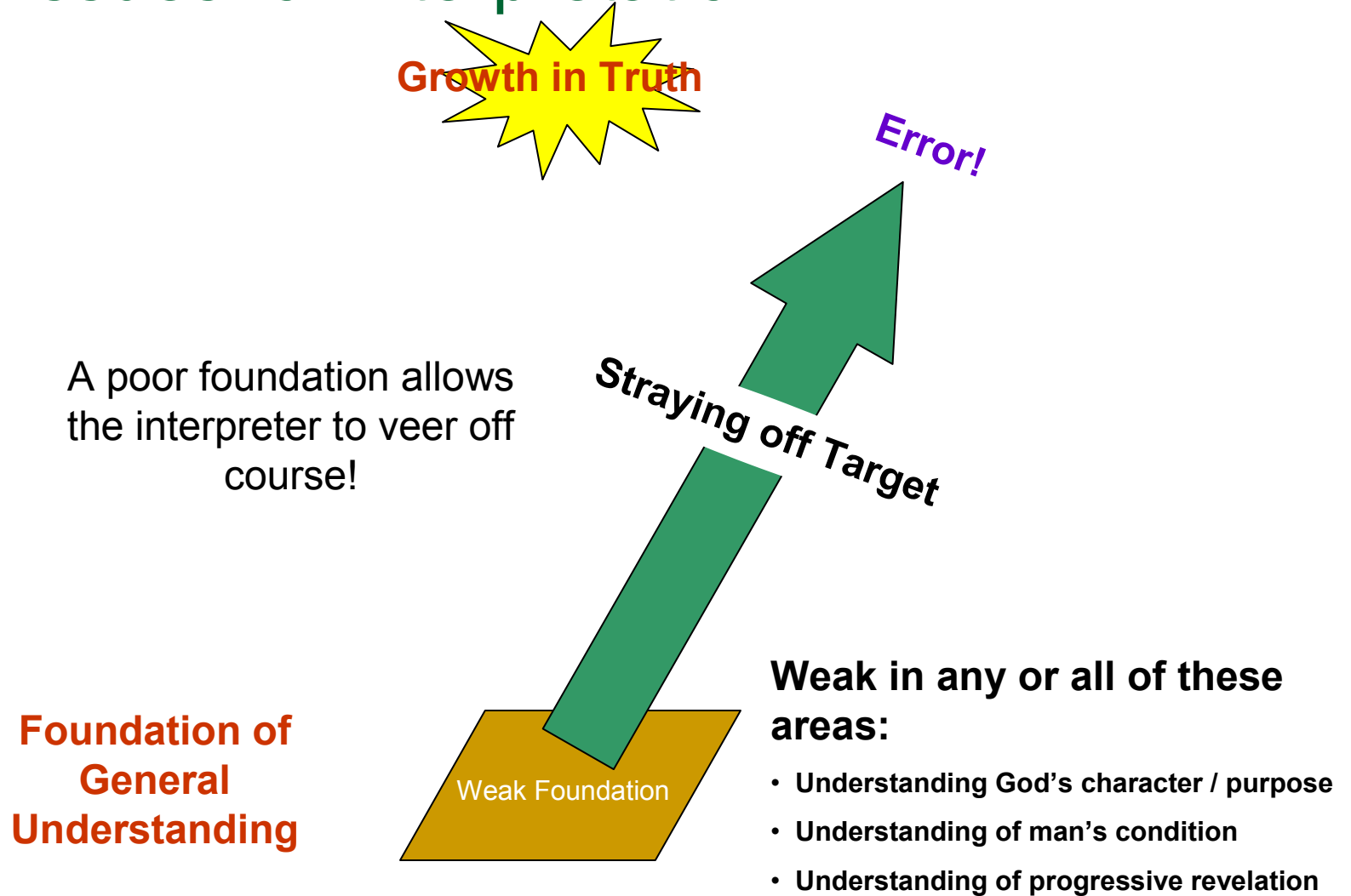
- Taken from the Mozaic law given to Israel (Decalogue)
- No NT teaching or endorsement – Gospel’s related to abuse by religious leaders, and out-of-context referral in Heb 4:1-11
- Ignoring all NT references (Gal 3:23-25;4:9-10; Col 2:16)

# Initial issues for interpretation....





# Initial issues for interpretation....



### Example of being weak in the guiding basics:

**“You should know that a child of God:**

Can be lost (1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 3:12-19)” **From the Church of Christ Official Website**

“You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” **Gal 5:4**

- There is a lack of understanding concerning God’s character & purpose in salvation, and the lost condition of man (ultimately, the nature of the new birth).
- There is a neglect of the context.
- There is a neglect of all other passages that teach eternal security.
- No serious word study – only an effort to use a verse to reinforce a preconceived idea.
  - “Fallen” – (Rom 9:6; Acts 27:26) ekpipto – to become inefficient
  - In this context, Paul is not addressing the specific reality in their lives – he is making an argument, “grace” is to be understood as *the gospel system of salvation in Christ*. They have exchanged the system of grace for a system of works and thereby nullified the system of grace (it has become inefficient, or ineffective).

### Example of being weak in the guiding basics:

**Isa 53:5** But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

**1Pe 2:24** and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Years ago, a woman was carried into one of my services. She had not walked in four years, and doctors said she would never walk again. I sat down beside her and placed my open Bible on her lap. I said, "Sister, please read that verse out loud." She read First Peter 2:24 aloud. And when she ended with "...by whose stripes ye were healed," I asked, "Is 'were' past tense, present tense, or future tense?" I will never forget her reaction, "Were is past tense," she exclaimed. "And if we were healed, then I was healed!" She accepted God's Word with the enthusiasm and simplicity of a child - the way we must. And that's how God records it in His Word. He doesn't promise to heal us, because He's already provided healing for us almost 2,000 years ago! Healing is something we already have in Christ. This woman's face lit up as she lifted her hands and said, "Praise God! Lord, I'm so glad I'm healed! Lord, I'm so glad I can walk again! [And she hadn't walked a step yet.] I'm so glad I'm not helpless anymore. I'm so glad I can wait on myself..." "Rise and walk!" I said. And the woman leaped to her feet! Praise the Lord! Kenneth Hagin

- **Not understanding man's condition or God's character & purpose**
- **Ignoring the context – making it what we want it to say!**

healed – (isomai – *Greek*) – “to be made whole”

The object of the “to be made whole” is “die to sin and live to righteousness” – it has to do with being cured from the mastery of sin. It has nothing to do with physical healing.

# The difference interpretation makes:

**Acts 1:6 – 7** So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;"

“The question must have filled Jesus with dismay. Were they still so lacking in perception? The verb, the noun and the adverb of their sentence all betray doctrinal confusion about the kingdom. The verb restore shows that they were expecting a political and territorial kingdom; the noun Israel that they were expecting a national kingdom; and the adverbial clause “at this time” that they were expecting its immediate establishment. In His reply Jesus corrected their mistaken notions of the kingdom’s nature, extent and arrival.” John Stott

“For forty days, the risen Lord had been instructing the apostles "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," doubtless, according to His custom (Luk 24:27); (Luk 24:32); (Luk 24:44); (Luk 24:45) teaching them out of the Scriptures. One point was left untouched, namely, the time when He would restore the kingdom to Israel; hence the apostles' question. The answer was according to His repeated teaching; the time was God's secret. (Mat 24:36); (Mat 24:42); (Mat 24:44); (Mat 25:13); (1Th 5:1).” C I Scofield

### What is allegorical interpretation?

- Allegory is simply looking for a higher sense of meaning from a passage than the literal brings (beneath the obvious meaning is the real meaning).
- It was introduced historically by the Alexandrian school in the early centuries after the Apostles by Philo, and was adopted and promoted by Augustine.
- It begun with the idea that much in the Bible was intellectually incredible if understood literally, but could be more acceptable if allegorized.
- The method progressed with the thinking that by allegorization the intention of the Spirit who controlled the writers could be penetrated.
- One major form of allegorization is typological interpretation which views the Bible as a recital of God's saving acts given in various pictures and types – literal meanings are neglected or avoided.
- The most obvious problem with this form of interpretation is that the interpreters mind becomes the means of establishing meaning.

### Allegorizing interpretative example:

**2 Ki 6:4-7** So he went with them (Elisha); and when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, my master! For it was borrowed." Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw *it* in there, and made the iron float. He said, "Take it up for yourself." So he put out his hand and took it."

"The incident which has been before us may, we consider, be justly regarded as broadly illustrating what is portrayed by the law and the gospel. It serves to give us a typical picture of the sinner's ruin and redemption. As the result of being dissatisfied with the position God originally assigned us – subjection to His authority – we (in Adam) appropriated what was not ours, and in consequence suffered a fearful fall. The inanimate iron falls into the Jordan – the place of judgment – is an apt figure of the elect in their natural state: dead in trespasses and sins, incapable of doing anything for their deliverance." A. W. Pink

"Elisha's throwing in the stick was aimed at helping those who stood by to realize that the coming up of the iron ax head was not a natural but a supernatural phenomenon brought about by God Himself, simply through the prophet's instrumentality...the stick was appropriate to the occasion. It indicated that iron could be made to float like wood by the sovereign power of the Lord, who made the world and established natural law, and who for special purposes could set it aside." Merrill Unger

### What is spiritualizing interpretation?

- The NT is the fulfillment of the OT. The NT is taken back into the interpretation of the OT instead of allowing the OT meaning in the context of its own setting.
- The interpretation of any passage becomes subjective based on whether the interpreter wants to be more literal or figurative.
- It denies the concept of progressive revelation. By applying later revelation back to an earlier and different context, it changes the original meaning of the original context.
- Prophecy also becomes subjective rather than literal unless it can be seen as prophecy already fulfilled, and even that may be subjected to a spiritualized meaning.
- Future prophecy is more often than not taken figuratively rather than literally. As this is subjective, the interpreter can make the meaning of any yet unfulfilled prophecy anything.

### Spiritualizing interpretation prophecy example:

**Micah 4:1-2** And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

“Today all nations come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God (Heb 12:22, which was formerly symbolized by earthly Mount Zion. With Christ’s ascension from earth to heaven the earthly material symbols were done away and the spiritual reality portrayed by the symbols supersede the earthly shadows.” Bruce Waltke

Idea – there is no future fulfillment by literal Israel, but only a present fulfillment by a Spiritual Israel – the church.

“The kingdom is the earthly millennial kingdom of the Messiah that will be established over Israel (Acts 1:6-7) in the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant and of the practically universal voice of Old Testament seers. This section of Micah’s prophecy presents Israel’s eventual glorious future in the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, despite the inglorious state of sin and apostasy into which the divided nation of God’s people had fallen at the time” Merrill Unger



### What is the normative interpretative approach?

- The Scriptures are to be understood in the normative meaning of words.
- The words of Scripture are to be understood in the historical and grammatical situation in which they are found (their immediate context).
- The purpose of language is for communication given by God for communicating with man (1 Cor 2:13).
- The fulfillment of all prophecies in the past demonstrate and show that yet to be fulfilled future prophecy is to be understood in a literal sense (Ps 22; Isa 7:14; 53:1-12; Micah 5:2).
- This is a consistent manner of approaching all portions of Scripture for it has with it the same principles for interpretation (it takes away the subjective that leads to poor doctrine and practice).
- There must be within the normative approach the recognition of figures and symbols, and these also must be interpreted in the most normative practical manner according to the contextual intent.

## Basics on Approaching the Bible

### Normative interpretation example:

**Rev 20:1 -8** “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.”

“Then” indicates a chronological time frame from the previous passage. Christ has returned to the earth in triumph destroying the armies of the earth that oppose Him, and now He casts Satan into a form of incarceration (bound) so that he is not able to deceptively influence people on the earth. Christ reigns with His saints for 1,000 years (this time is prophesied in great detail in the Old Testament). This is a wonderful time of peace,

## Basics on Approaching the Bible

righteousness, and prosperity. Those who enter the earthly kingdom are those who were Christ's and alive on the earth at the time of His coming, and those who are His that have died and been resurrected. This is spoken of as the first resurrection, and by its inference would include all the saved before and during the tribulation, including those alive at the rapture. These are all spoken of as being blessed and holy – they are holy because they are in Christ, and they are blessed to be a part of the kingdom of Christ. The unsaved dead are not resurrected until after this period – their resurrection is separate from the saints. At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan is released and deceives again. He is deceiving those who have been born during the 1,000 years who are by then a great host (this must be so as those who are truly saints cannot be deceived).” Jim Bryant

“The introductory phrase “Then I saw” does not indicate that John is having a vision of events temporally subsequent to the events of the previous nineteen chapters. Rather, it's simply a new vision; and, accordingly it is a vision of events that are not restricted to the return of Christ. The defeat of Satan is here described and the curtailment of his influence is described in two ways: he is cast into a bottomless pit and he is bound; what this means must be defined by the context. This is not a description of Satan's final destiny, the lake of fire (cf. vv. 10, 14-15). Rather, it is a symbolic description of how Satan's influence is curtailed during the one thousand years. Specifically, the effect of the binding of Satan, of his being cast into a pit, is that he is no longer able to deceive the nations (vs 3), this is the definition of the binding that is actually given in the text. This then is a reference to the breaking of Satan's stranglehold upon the nations as a result of the work of Christ.

## Basics on Approaching the Bible

Thus Satan is currently in the pit, he is currently bound. This does not mean that Satan is not active in many other ways. We wholeheartedly believe that Satan tempts people and that he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8). But with respect to his deceiving the nations as he once did, he is bound. Put positively, the binding of Satan coincides with the progress and triumph of the Gospel among the nations. Consequently, this is a great missions text, giving the Church encouragement and confidence that the proclamation of the Gospel will bear fruit. The period of time during which Satan is bound and in the pit (and during which the martyrs reign with Christ) is a thousand years (a millennium). Numbers in the Bible are frequently symbolic. It would be natural to expect that in this, arguably the most symbolic book of the Bible, that we would find many symbolic numbers. Ten is a number of completeness. One thousand is ten cubed. Thus we would suggest that the thousand years is a long period of time of indeterminate length representing the present age in its fullness.

The rest of the dead – this reference in vs 5 is to the unbelieving dead. But if the interpretation of “coming to life” given above is correct, why does the text read “the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended?” Does not the use of the word “until” imply that at the end of the thousand years the rest of the dead do come to life and does not this fact invalidate our contention that the first resurrection refers to a spiritual resurrection? It might seem so. But the use of the word “until” in Scripture does not necessarily imply that a condition which prevails up to a certain point will change afterwards. In other words, the rest of the dead never do come to life in the sense of vs 4. David Sherwood

### Understanding the Normative Approach.

#### ■ What do we mean?

- Each Biblical writing – that is each word, sentence, and book – was recorded in a written language, and followed normal grammatical meanings, including figurative language.
- It was immediately understood. It did not have to be decoded, or deciphered by a magical formula. The words were immediately understandable.
- The basic presupposition of interpretation is that God is a God of sense, not of nonsense. By this is meant that whatever God revealed through His ancient spokesmen must have made sense both to them and to their hearers.
- The corollary suggests that we should not go to the Bible with preconceived notions or ideas, but instead should let the Bible speak for itself. For example in Mark 5:1-20 the demons do not mean false doctrine nor do the swine represent the unconscious mind.”
- Example: “if you were to say to an audience, ‘I crossed the ocean from the United States to Europe,’ you wouldn’t want them to interpret your statement to mean that you crossed life’s difficult waters into the haven of a new experience.”
- Whenever we read a book, an essay, or a poem we presume the literal sense in the document until the nature of the literature may force us to another level. This is the only conceivable method of beginning or commencing to understand literature of all kinds.
- The goal of Bible interpretation is to determine the original meaning of the text. This is called exegesis.\*

### What is the hermeneutic of Paul?

- **Rom 4:3** “For what does the Scripture say? ‘ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.’”
- **Rom 9:17** “For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.”
- **Rom 10:11** “For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”
- **Rom 11:2-4** “God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ‘LORD, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE, but what is the Divine response to him? ‘I HAVE KEPT FOR MYSELF SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.’”
- **Gal 3:8-9** “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, “ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.” So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.”
- **Gal 3:22** “But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.
- **1 Tim 5:18** “For the Scripture says, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

Sensible, reasonable, normative, literal, grammatical, clear, & natural

### Closing thoughts for this session:

“Beware! Neither experience nor emotion is the basis of faith. The basis for our faith is that certain things are true. The whole man, including the intellect, is to act upon the fact that certain things are true. That of course will lead to an experiential relationship with God, but the basis is content not experience.” [Francis Schaeffer](#)

“In the dumbing down we have witnessed in America with its happy-clappy kind of Christianity so prevalent today, we are witnessing a growing anti-intellectualism in the church. For many of the present generation, experience has become more important than truth, but experience without truth is the menace and misery of a mindless Christianity, and one of the issues we face is that God’s truth is found for us in the Bible (not that the Bible is the truth). So not only have we been faced with a battle for the inerrancy of the Bible, but for the need to return to the Bible as God’s holy Word as the foundation of our faith and experience.” [J Hampton Keathley](#)

In praying for the disciples:

[John 17:16-17](#). “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.”