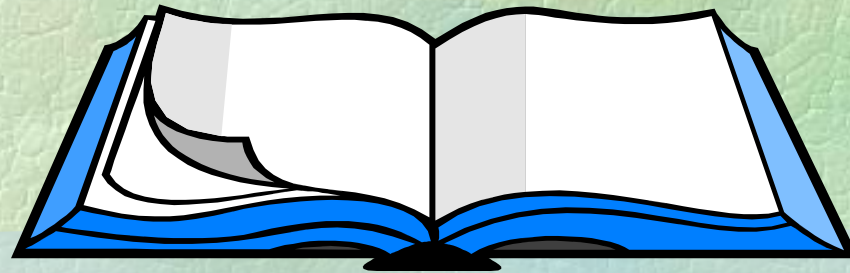


# How To Read The Bible



For All Its Worth!

# Goals For This Class

- To give a basic approach to understanding the biblical text
- To examine historical methods of interpretation
- To consider other methods of interpretation
- To promote unity of shared understanding
- To relate elders' views on interpretation

# Not Goals For This Class

- To ensure everybody believes what I do
- To ensure everybody believes the same thing
- To debate controversial passages of scripture
- To negate or endorse any particular interpretative approach
- To confuse, frustrate, or agitate truthseekers

# Hermeneutics I:



Traditional Approaches

# Basic Components of Biblical Interpretation

## ■ Exegesis

- 1. Determining what the passage says
- 2. Determining what the passage *meant*

## ■ Hermeneutics

- 1. Determining what the passage *means*
- 2. Making application in our daily lives

# Interpretive Corollary Number 1

The text cannot mean something to us today, that it did not mean to the people who first read it.

## Interpretive Corollary Number 2

Everyone uses a hermeneutic of some type. There is no right or wrong hermeneutic.

Hermeneutics are from man, not God.

# Pattern or Authorization Hermeneutics

- Rational approach using inductive reasoning
- View N.T. as “legal code” or “constitution”
- Requires commands, approved examples, or necessary inferences
- Requires authority of silence
- Determines the bounds of fellowship



# Positive Attributes Of This Approach

- A statement of faith in God's revelation
- Establishes authority of scripture as primary
- Rejects human creeds and commits us to God's revelation
- Calls us back to God's written word
- The "pattern" concept is biblical

# Negative Aspects Of This Approach

- Originates from man, not from God
- Lends itself to legalistic application
- Requires consistency in application
- Puts focus on church rather than on Jesus
- Tends to divide rather than unite believers
- Returns us to an “old law” style covenant

# The Origin of Pattern Hermeneutics

- The Age of Reason or “Enlightenment”
- Rene Descartes (1596-1650) - Rationalism
- John Locke (1632-1704) - believed scripture to be wholly consistent with reason
- Thomas & Alexander Campbell - utilized Locke’s reasoning to call for unity

Locke affirmed that nothing could be bound on Christians other than what the Scripture explicitly says:

...if it be not more agreeable to the Church of Christ to make the conditions of her communion consist in such things, and such things only, as the Holy Spirit has in the Holy Scriptures declared, in express words, to be necessary for salvation.

John Locke

Campbell thought nothing ought to be required of Christians as terms of communion...

...but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the word of God...either in express terms or by approved precedent.

Although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so...Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion.

# The Authority Of Commands

- Commands are not arbitrary
- Commands have purpose (Noah/Abraham)
- Some commands are not generalizable
- Some commands are universal
- Commands may be inclusive or exclusive

# Inclusive vs Exclusive Commands

- Inclusive Commands
  - alternatives acceptable
  - example: Acts 2:38 does not exclude prayer, communion or godly living
- Exclusive Commands
  - alternatives forbidden
  - example: command to immerse does exclude sprinkling

# Commands vs God's Grace

- Commands may be plain and explicit
- Our obedience may be less than perfect
- God's grace covers our failures
- We should not withhold fellowship from a penitent believer whom God forgives
- We will be judged as we have judged
- Perfect obedience is a dangerous requirement



# Church Issues With No Commands

- Observance of communion
- Plurality of elders
- General church treasury
- Congregational autonomy

# Characteristics of Biblical Examples

- Examples are inclusive, not exclusive
- Examples are permissive, not prohibitive
- Examples broaden horizons; don't limit vision
- Examples emphasize morality, not methods
- Examples communicate values, not conflict

# Characteristics of Biblical Examples

- Examples are stimulative, not restrictive
- Examples are motivating, not demanding
- Examples clarify, don't obscure
- Examples may illustrate motives
- Examples demonstrate methods, but do not restrict
- Examples tell us how something was done

# Questions About Biblical Examples

- Are examples “patterns” we must obey?
- What makes an example “binding?”
- Does the absence of an example prohibit?

# Consistency in Biblical Example

- Breaking of bread before distribution
- Use of a single cup for communion
- Assembly in “upper rooms”

# Definitions of Biblical Inferences

- Deduction or conclusion one derives from biblical study that is not explicitly stated
- Reasonable inference - what is probable, but cannot be considered authoritative
- Necessary inference - a conclusion that mandates a particular belief or action to please God

## Some Common “Necessary Inferences”

- Church buildings
- Hymnals
- Baptistries
- Plurality of elders
- Spiritual gifts limited to apostles (I Tim 4:14?)
- Laying on of hands (I Tim 5:22?)

# Summary of Authorization Hermeneutics

- Logical and reasonable approach
- Of human origin, not divine
- Tends to promote legalism and division rather than unity of believers



# Questions or Comments?



**Next Week:**

**Hermeneutics II: The “New” Hermeneutic**