

MODULE 7: SESSION 5

APPLIED THEOLOGY

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Interpretation Part 1: Special Issues in Interpretation (part 1)

NOTE: Most of today is just to edify you that Scripture is VERY detailed and extremely structured because it has a divine author. AND to prepare you to interact intelligently with commentaries and other Bible Study helps when they mention these terms and issues. [REMEMBER you will get these notes so just relax and listen]

1. Literary Genre

a. Introduction

- i. *Genre* is a word of French origin that means “form” or “kind”
- ii. *Literary Genre* simply means “What kind of literature is it?”
- iii. OT – we have narrative, law, poetry, prophecy, wisdom
- iv. NT – we have gospel, narrative/history (Acts), epistles (letter), prophetic-apocalyptic (Revelation)
- v. There can be overlap or multiple genres present: e.g., Jonah is both prophecy and narrative with an emphasis on narrative. E.g., Lamentations is considered poetry while in the section of prophecy
- vi. Both Testaments have sub-genres (parables, riddles, speeches, etc)
- vii. The genre gives you a clue about the type of communication and the instinctive rules that accompany it –
 1. Take the phrase: “Let’s Make a Deal!” – The genre of literature in which this phrase occurs tells you much about the meaning:
 2. If it occurs in an email between you and a business partner, this means you are on your way to making a profit.
 - a. If it occurs on a billboard advertising a local casino, it means you are on your way to taking a loss.
- viii. POINT: Genre shapes our expectations about how to approach a particular text.
- ix. In 1978 the first version of the Chicago Statement on Bible Inerrancy was released – in the 80’s the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics was also released – 25 articles affirming the highest principles of proper Bible interpretation – FOUR of the articles refer to literary form as key to proper interpretation

b. Law – portions of Scripture such as...

- i. Exodus 20-40
 - ii. Book of Leviticus
 - iii. Portions of Numbers
 - iv. Most of Deuteronomy
- c. Narrative – a story for the purpose of conveying a specific message
- i. EXAMPLE: Difference between 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Chronicles
 - 1. 2 Samuel includes selected material from David’s life that includes the good, the bad, and the ugly.
 - a. MESSAGE: Sin results in devastating disappointment and consequences
 - 2. 1 & 2 Chronicles omit much of David’s sin, but include extensive treatment of David as king, the priests, and the temple.
 - a. MESSAGE: When the groups of Jews returning from captivity under Zerubbabel (538 BC) and Ezra (458 BC), the people were downcast having no temple and no king. 1 & 2 Chronicles written to encourage the remnant that the Davidic line would continue and that the temple would return.
 - ii. A Typical Narrative Pattern:
 - 1. Background/Introduction
 - 2. Problem
 - 3. Solution to Problem
 - 4. Conclusion
 - iii. Subtypes of Narrative (don’t worry about it – just for your information)
 - 1. Tragedy – the story of a decline of a person – e.g., Samson, Saul, Solomon – each has a lesson for us
 - 2. Epic/History – Long narrative with a series of events around a person or group of people – e.g., Israel’s wilderness wanderings –
 - a. in the NT, Acts is narrative history around the ministry of Peter and Paul
 - 3. Romance – narrative which outlines a romantic relationship between a man and a woman. E.g. Song of Solomon and Ruth
 - 4. Heroic – Built around the life of a hero – Abraham, Gideon, David, Daniel, Paul
 - 5. Satire – Exposure of a human weakness through rebuke. E.g. Jonah – challenged Israelites to see their own harsh attitudes toward the lost and pagan nations

6. Polemic – Refuting the views of others or aggressive attack against heresy. E.g., Elijah’s contest with 450 prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 or the 10 Plagues against the gods and goddesses of Egypt
- d. Poetry – Traditionally, there are listed five major books of poetry:
 - i. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
 - ii. Want to include Lamentations, however, which is a poem
 - iii. Many poems within narratives, however (e.g., Mary’s song of Luke 1)
 - iv. IMPORTANT: The distinctive feature of biblical poetry is *parallelism* – two (and sometimes 3 or 4) lines are presented in parallel form –
 1. Complementary – two lines which are synonymous in meaning
 2. Contrast – two lines which are opposite each other in contrast
 3. Progressive – two lines which have one meaning with the second line giving more information than the first
 - e. Wisdom Literature – Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (some include James at the NT’s “Proverbs”) (some, including Steve Swartz, include Song of Solomon)
 - f. Gospels – these stand alone as a literary type as historical narratives which include doctrine.
 - i. More than just a story; doctrinal conclusions can be drawn from the gospels.
 - ii. They specifically present the person of the God-Man, Jesus Christ to (a) bring the lost to a decision and (b) bring the saved to great intimate knowledge of their Savior
 - g. Epistles (Letters)
 - i. Romans – Jude
 - ii. Two basic types of material: Doctrine and Duty
 - iii. PURPOSE: To give direct teaching as opposed to implied lessons
 - iv. Epistles give us our strongest doctrinal positions but this does not depreciate the value of doctrinal implications found in other genres. BUT: A doctrine formed from another genre that is NOT confirmed in epistles should be weighed carefully before drawing final conclusions.
 - h. Prophecy –
 - i. Includes predictions of the future
 - ii. Includes admonitions of how to live in light of the prophecy

- iii. Revelation is its own category of prophetic-apocalyptic –dealing with cataclysmic events on a global scale in the end times
 - i. Why Genre Matters:
 - i. Helps us understand the overall thrust of the book
 - ii. Helps prevent taking verses out of context
 - iii. Helps you get into the mind of the author
- 2. Structural Analysis [slide of man snoring]
 - a. Structural Analysis has to do with how a book or a specific section or single passage is structured – this helps understand the mind of the author and the intent of the text
 - b. EXAMPLE: Book of Revelation
 - i. What You have Seen (Revelation 1)
 - ii. What is Now (Revelation 2 - 3)
 - iii. What Will Take Place (Revelation 4 - 22)
 - c. Sample Small Structural Patterns (don't worry about learning or memorizing – just use it to help you understand how to evaluate the structure of a passage)
 - i. Parallel Patterns – primarily in poetry
 - ii. Ring or “Sandwich” pattern
 - 1. Central material has parallel material seemingly unrelated before and after
 - a. IE: Gen 37 = story of Joseph being sold into slavery
 - b. Gen 38 story of Judah's sin with Tamar
 - c. Gen 39 – resumes the story of Joseph
 - d. POINT: Contrast of Joseph's purity and Judah's sin
 - 2. Gospel of Mark has 14 large “sandwich portions” which help us interpret the entire text
 - a. IE: Mark 8:22-26 – Jesus heals a timid blind man in stages (only time)
 - b. Mark 8:27- 10:45 Jesus foretells his death and resurrection three times and each time his disciples show evidence of not totally getting it yet. But they show some progress.
 - c. Mark 10:46-52 – The instant healing of a bold blind man with faith.
 - d. POINT: Illustration of the slowness with which the eyes of the disciples were being opened to the person of Jesus Christ and his mission to die.

- iii. Chiasm Pattern (or Inversion Pattern)¹ – named after Greek letter Chi which looks like an X: (either even or odd number of elements)

A
 B
 (Sometimes C)
 B¹
 A¹

1. Seen very frequently in Scripture
2. The middle portion is the most important or climactic portion of the text
3. IE: Matthew 7:6 “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

A -Do not give dogs what is holy
 B -Do not throw your pearls before pigs
 B¹- Lest they trample them underfoot [pigs]
 A¹-And turn and attack you [dogs]

4. Larger portion: Flood Narrative²:

A – God’s Covenant with Noah
 B – Noah brought clean animals
 C – Noah brought unclean animals
 D – Noah entered the ark
 E – Flood rose
 F – Flood crested, ark rested, God remembered Noah
 E¹ – Flood receded
 D¹ – Noah exited the ark
 C¹ – Noah Sacrificed Animals
 B¹ – Noah’s new diet (meat allowed)
 A¹ – God’s Covenant with Noah

5. IE: Entire book of Ruth is one giant Chiastic Pattern
- iv. Acrostic Pattern – each verse or section begins with next letter of the alphabet
1. Proverbs 31:10-31 -Excellent Wife

¹ Roy Zuck distinguishes between these two. *Basic Bible Interpretation* p. 138-39, but such a detailed distinction not necessary for the average Bible student.

² Adapted from Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 140.

2. Psalm 119 – 22 8-verse sections
 3. Lamentations 2 and 4 of 22 verses each, chpt 3 66 verses with 3 verses on each letter
 - d. POINT: Look for any structural pattern in your text AND/OR if it is part of a larger structural pattern with one distinctive message – this takes practice so for your assignment you will just kind of play around with it and see what you come up with-
 - e. HINT: Introductions to books often help you with their outlines of the book
3. Figures of Speech
- a. Definition: A figure of speech is a word or sentence used in a different way from its original or most basic meaning."
 - i. E.g. "It's raining cats and dogs." = "It's raining hard."
 - ii. There are at least 25 identifiable types of figure of speech (specialized topic for another time)
 - b. Hermeneutic Note: The Bible's use of figurative language does not diminish the literal nature of Scripture. All figurative language still represents something that is (a) literal and (b) discernable.
 - i. Jesus is "The Lamb of God." – A figurative term to mean a literal sacrifice.
 - c. Why does the Bible Use Figurative Language?
 - i. Adds color, vividness and gives immediate meaning.
 1. "The Lord is my Rock" (Ps 18:2)
 - ii. Gets your attention
 1. "Watch out for those dogs" (Phil 3:2)
 - iii. Makes Abstract or Difficult Ideas More Concrete
 1. "The hand of the Lord was upon me" (Ezekiel 3, 8, 33) is easier to understand than "The Lord superintended my spirit at that moment to totally guide me into a vision of the future."
 - iv. Helps us Remember
 1. "You are like whitewashed tombs" (Matt 23:27)
 - a. Helps us understand that the basic problem of the Pharisees was that they looked good on the outside but were dead on the inside.
 - v. Capture a Big Idea Easily
 1. "The Lord is my Shepherd" (Ps 23:1)
 - vi. Encourage Reflection and Thinking about God's Word
 1. "He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season." (Psalm 1:3)
 - d. How Can You Identify a Figure of Speech?

- i. Always take a passages literally unless there is a good reason for not doing so.
 - 1. All the numbers of the book of Revelation – 1,000 years, 144,000 sealed Jews, 1,260 days, three and half days. No reason in the text to make this figurative.
- ii. Take the passage figuratively when it tells you to do so
 - 1. Almost any dream or vision will include some if not all figurative language (E.g, Joseph’s dreams with the sun, moon and stars bowing down)
 - 2. Prophetic visions of Daniel 7-12 are clearly figurative.
- iii. Take the passage figuratively if it is a simile (“like” or “as”)
 - 1. “As the deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1)
- iv. Take the passage figuratively if a literal interpretation is contrary to the context or the purpose of the passage.
 - 1. Revelation 5:1-5 speaks of the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” – in context the main character is Jesus Christ, not a beast wandering around the throne room of God.
- v. Be aware that figurative language is a major technique in prophecy and poetry. Don’t be surprised to find it there.
- vi. Take a passage figuratively if the literal sense would involve an impossibility or absurdity.
 - 1. The Lord told Jeremiah that he was making him into a fortified city, an iron pillar, with bronze walls.” (Jer 1:18)
 - 2. The trees of the field clapping their hands (Isaiah 55:12)
- vii. Take a passage figuratively if the literal would involve immorality.
 - 1. Jesus spoke of eating his flesh and drinking his blood (John 6:53-58) which if taken literally is cannibalistic.
- viii. If a figurative statement is followed by a literal explanation, the figurative sense is confirmed.
 - 1. Paul spoke of those who “fall asleep” in 1 Thess 4 then follows up with the fact that they had died.
 - 2. “Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph 6:17)
- e. How to Interpret Figures of Speech
 - i. Determine if the language is figurative or literal.
 - ii. Once figurative is determined, discover the literal sense
 - 1. E.g., Jesus said in John 2:19, “Destroy this temple” referring to his body.
 - iii. Give the reason for the comparison

IMAGE	NON-IMAGE	COMPARISON
-------	-----------	------------

Shield (Eph 6:16)	Faith	Faith is a protection
Sheep (Isaiah 53:6)	Mankind	Man spiritually wanders away
True Vine (John 15:1)	Jesus	Only by connection to the Lord Jesus is there life.

4. SIDE ISSUE: Idioms – Slightly different than figures of speech
- a. Definition: “a string of words whose meaning is different than the meaning convey by individual words.”³
 - b. Examples: “hit the sack” “kick the bucket” “snowed under”
 - c. An idiom is a metaphor that has taken on its own literal meaning
 - d. Biblical Examples:
 - i. Matthew 12:40 (ESV) – 40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
 1. “Three days and three nights” is idiomatic for any parts of three days and three nights. Since Jesus was crucified on Friday and resurrection on Sunday, he was not in the grave for three 24-hour days.
 - ii. “son of” something indicates that the person has the CHARACTER of that thing:
 1. “sons of disobedience” (Eph 5:6)
 2. “sons of light” (1 Thess 5:5)

5. Typology

- a. From Greek *tupos* - a mark, pattern, example – NOTE: This word is NOT always used in the technical sense in the NT
- b. Definition of TYPE: “A type may be defined as an Old Testament person, event, or thing having historical reality and designed by God to prefigure (foreshadow) in a preparatory way a real person, event, or thing so designated in the New Testament and that corresponds to and fulfills (heightens) the type.”⁴
- c. Definition of ANTITYPE: The ultimate fulfillment and reality that the TYPE points to.
- d. Definition of ILLUSTRATION: “Biblical person, event, or thing having historical reality, that pictures or is analogous to some corresponding

³ Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 165.

⁴ Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 176.

spiritual truth in a natural and unforced way and is not explicitly designated in the New Testament as a type.”⁵

- e. Elements of a TYPE⁶:
 - i. Resemblance – there is a clear comparison
 - ii. Historical Reality – the types are persons who really lived and events that really happened
 - iii. Prefiguring – a predictive or foreshadowing element
 - iv. Heightening – the antitype is greater than and superior to the type
 - v. Divine Design – God designed it to be seen as a clear type
 - vi. Designated in the NT as a type
- f. Dangers of Seeing Types Everywhere:
 - i. Extremely type-finding leads to allegorizing Scripture.
 - 1. Now there is a forced or “hidden” meaning.
 - ii. Extreme type-finding leads to not seeking the original meaning of an OT text
 - iii. Extreme type-finding leads to reinterpreting the OT with the NT instead of accepting the original intent of the authors of the OT.
 - 1. IE: If I identify Solomon as a type of Christ (although there are many many similarities) then I miss the lessons of the life of Solomon and I miss his importance in the Davidic Covenant.
- g. Example of TYPES/ ANTITYPES which are identified as such in the NT:
 - i. Passover lamb/ Christ (John 1:29)
 - ii. Melchizedek /Christ (Heb 6:20)
 - iii. Aaron/Christ (Heb 5:4-5)
 - iv. Feast of Unleavened Bread/ Believer’s Holy Walk (1 Cor 5:7-8)
 - v. Feast of Firstfruits/ Christ’s resurrection a pledge of believers’ resurrection.
 - vi. NOTE: Roy Zuck identifies 17 clear type/antitype examples from NT.⁷
- h. Examples of ILLUSTRATIONS not specifically designated as types:
 - i. Moses/Jesus
 - ii. Joseph/Jesus
 - iii. Solomon/Christ
- i. Special Issue with Typology: ADAM –
 - i. Remember that *typos* is not always used in the technical sense?

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 173ff.

⁷ Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 179 – 80.

- ii. Romans 5:14 (ESV) – 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.
 - iii. BUT: Adam doesn't meet the six criteria of a type –
 - 1. Adam certainly is analogous to Christ in many ways.
 - 2. BUT: Adam's life can hardly be viewed as a prefiguring of Christ.
 - 3. Adam is presented in many ways as the OPPOSITE of Christ: through Adam came DEATH and through CHRIST came LIFE
 - j. POINT: Be conservative with typology since over-doing it can start to look for hidden truths and secret meanings that Scripture did not intend.
 - k. RULE of THUMB: There are LOTS of illustrations and FEW types – but the types are SPECIAL and PRECIOUS to us because they confirm (a) what is important to God and (b) his clear sovereign hand over redemptive history.

- 6. Our Example Passage: Ephesians 4:31-32 (ESV) – 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. –
 - a. Literary Genre – epistle
 - i. Direct didactic teaching on either doctrine or duty.
 - ii. Ephesians 4 is teaching on Christian duty
 - b. Figures of Speech? None
 - c. Idiom? “put away” like putting away an item of clothing or discarding something
 - d. Typology?--None
 - e. Structural Analysis:
 - i. Command 1: Get rid of the negative (bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander)
 - 1. Lack of Grace (along with all malice)
 - ii. Command 2: Take on the positive (Be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving)
 - 1. Remember Grace (As God is Christ forgave you.)
 - 2. NOTE: This is almost poetic in nature! Has parallelism!

- 7. Assignment: Short Bible Study Assignment:
 - a. What is the literary genre of my passage?
 - b. Are there any figures of speech? (HINT: Each of the five assigned passages has at least one.)
 - c. OPTIONAL: Try a structural analysis of your passage

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Henricks, *Living by the Book*.

Mayhue, *How to Study the Bible*

Duvall and Hays, *Journey into God's Word*

Parker, *Hermeneutics*, 1999.

Rosscup, James, *Hermeneutics* (The Master's Seminary)