

HERMENEUTICS

AND THE RULES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

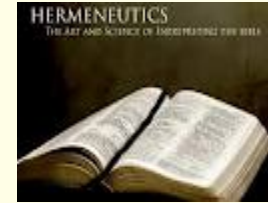


HERMENEUTICS – A WORKING DEFINITION



- The science of biblical interpretation
- The subdivision of theology that aids in exegesis
- The rules governing biblical interpretation

A NOTE ON EXEGESIS



- Exegesis – the accomplished work or results of finding the meaning of a biblical text.



Why Hermeneutical Rules?

- To enable us to understand the biblical text
- To “rightly divide the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15)

UNDERSTAND THAT

- We are thousands of years from the historical events
- There are significant cultural differences
- The original texts were written in foreign languages



RULE: LET THE TEXT SPEAK

- Engage in the hard work of drawing meaning from the text itself.
- Respect it literally first.



JOHN 1:1 – Agreement Among Linguistic Scholars

- Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **New Living Translation (©2007)**
In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- **English Standard Version (©2001)**
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- **New American Standard Bible (©1995)**
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- **King James Bible (Cambridge Ed.)**
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- **International Standard Version (©2008)**
In the beginning, the Word existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- **Aramaic Bible in Plain English (©2010)**
In the origin The Word had been existing and That Word had been existing with God and That Word was himself God.



THE HERMENEUTICAL FILTER

- JW's Hermeneutical Filter is the Watchtower Society



- Christian hermeneutics is centered on the person of Jesus Christ (i.e. Christo-centric)



RULE – COMPARE SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE

■ Hebrews 1:6

And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God *worship* (italics mine) him.

❖ **Worship**

(Gk. προσκυνησατωσαν) verb **proskuneo - pros-koo-neh'-o:** to fawn or crouch to, i.e. prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore) -- worship.

(Note: JW' s say obeisance, not worship).

■ John 4:24

God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must *worship* (italics mine) him in spirit and in truth.

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RULE: UNDERSTAND the GENRE

- Legal
- Poetry
- Polemic (Paul before Festus, Felix, Agrippa)
- Wisdom
- Gospel
- Epistle
- Logical discourse
- Prophecy
- Parable

Revelation 2:1-7

1Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; **2**I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: **3**And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. **4**Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. **5**Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. **6**But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. **7**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

RULE: Understand Figurative Language

- Simile
- Metaphor
- Irony
- Metonymy
- Hyperbole
- Personification
- Apostrophe
- Synecdoche

RULE: Understand Context

- Context is king

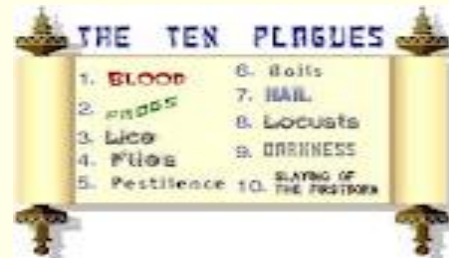


- Avoid pretext
- One interpretation – many applications

RULE: Understand Cultural Context



- Culture – a way of life as reflected in their mannerisms, customs, language, beliefs, social forms, actions, material artifacts.



- EXAMPLE: The 10 plagues of Exodus 7:20-12:29
- Each plague was a rebuke of an idol god.
- E.g. Isis-goddess of the Nile, Khnum-god of the Nile, Heqet-goddess of birth, had a head like a frog, Set-god of the dessert, gnats, Re-god of the sun...



RULE: ASK THE TEXT QUESTIONS

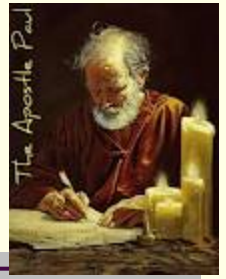
- Who is the speaker?
- Who is the writer? Where was he at the time?
- To whom was he writing?
- Why is he/she saying what he/she is saying?
- What is the writer's original intended meaning?
- What is the cultural/historical setting?
- How did the people then understand him?
- What is the mood of the author?
- What's the occasion?

ROMANS 4:17



- (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. (KJV)
- As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. (NIV)
- as Scripture says: “I have made you a father of many things.” Abraham believed when he stood in the presence of the God who gives life to dead people and calls into existence nations that don't even exist. (GWT)

Romans 4:17 – Purpose & Context



- Speaker/Writer – Paul
- Why – Justification by faith and grace were under attack; an apologetic
- Why 4:17? – To inspire faith in God’s power to “call into existence...”
- Context deals with God’s power and sovereignty, not man’s.
- Paul’s Mood – Defensive, i.e. in defense of the gospel
- Faith is for all
- Grace is for all
- Have faith in God not faith in faith

CONTEXT - Con' t

- Pay attention to the wherefores, therefore, but, and, henceforth, hitherto, nevertheless, now, moreover,...
- Adverbs and conjunctions show transitions from previous thoughts





BE A STUDENT

- Daniel 9:2- “In the first year of his reign I *Daniel understood by books* the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” (Italics/underscoring mine)
- 2 Timothy 4:13 – “When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.”

SOME RESOURCES

- www.biblecc.org
- www.biblegateway.com
- Theological Workbook of the Old Testament
- Vines Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words
- Expository Dictionary of Bible Words
- Treasury of Scripture Knowledge
- Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs
- Manners and Customs of the Bible
- Bible Commentaries