

Lecture 9 – Interpretation

“We invariably bring to the text all that we are, with all our experiences, culture, and prior understandings of words and ideas. Sometimes what we bring to the text, unintentionally to be sure, leads us astray, or else causes us to read all kinds of foreign ideas into the text.”

Fee and Stuart, Reading the Bible for All It's Worth

Key Terms

Eisogesis, exegesis, hermeneutical circle, analogy of faith (or Scripture), *sensus literalis*, distantiation

Objectives

*Analyze how one should read the Bible in light of: it being God's Word to man, and it being a revelation which includes many literary genres yet one overall theme.

Interpretation

I. Interpretation Is a Necessity.

A. All persons are interpreters.

Interpretation: the act of discerning the meaning of sensory stimuli

B. Modern relativism and biblical interpretation: are all interpretations equally valid?

Two assumptions:

1. People are bound by their contexts.
2. This personal context is the sole norm for interpretation and knowledge.

C. Evangelical individualism and biblical interpretation: are all interpretations equally valid?

II. The Role of Presuppositions

A. Francis Turretin and the problems of presumed objectivism and an over-extended use of the principle of clarity

1. Reasons for different interpretations
 - a. People lack sufficient knowledge of the text.
 - b. People remain biased regarding the text.

B. The need to recognize the fact that we all have presuppositions

1. Exegesis
2. Eisogesis
3. The hermeneutical circle

III. Intentional Presuppositions for Interpretation

A. Reader presuppositions

1. Reading is an act of interpretation.
2. Reading is a dynamic activity.
 - a. What sort of text is this? (genre)
 - b. What is the author trying to say? (intention)
 - c. Where is the author going with this line of discussion? (structure)
 - d. What does the author expect his reader to do, feel, think? (response)

B. Presuppositions about reading Scripture

1. The Bible is the authoritative and reliable (inspired and inerrant) Word of God.
2. The Bible has a particular content.
 - a. The Bible is revelation, a revealing of what is otherwise unknown.
 - b. The author means to communicate something. Two kinds of questions to help us arrive at the author's meaning:
 - 1) What does the author intend to say?

- 2) How would the original audience have understood the text?
3. The Bible is a unified Word.
 - a. What is God saying?
 - b. The analogy of faith or the analogy of Scripture

“This principle rests on the prior confidence in the Bible as the inspired Word of God. It is, therefore, consistent and coherent. Since it is assumed that God would never contradict himself, it is thought slanderous to the Holy Spirit to choose an alternate interpretation that would necessarily bring the Bible in conflict with itself.” R.C. Sproul