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March 2013

# Hermeneutics and Exegesis

Norm Mathers

*Liberty University*, [nmathers@liberty.edu](mailto:nmathers@liberty.edu)

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## Recommended Citation

Mathers, Norm, "Hermeneutics and Exegesis" (2013). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. Paper 189.  
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## **12:2 What is Hermeneutics?**

### **12:2:1 Definition**

Hermeneutics is the rules for interpreting the Word of God. It is the principles upon which the message of the inspired, inerrant Bible text can be arrived at (Chafer 1971: 115-118).

### **12:2:2 Rules for Interpreting the Scriptures**

#### **12:2:2:1 Scripture must be compared with other Scripture.**

The apostle Paul elaborates on this point in I Corinthians 2:13. This is especially helpful for even greater clarity on a biblical teaching in another passage. The complete teaching on any Bible doctrine will add a soundness to the scholar's study.

#### **12:2:2:2 The whole of Scripture must be considered in interpreting the Word of God.**

This is the basic scriptural foundation upon which hermeneutics rests. This will safeguard erroneous interpretations from the Scriptures. The Old Testament principle of faith found in the prophet Habakkuk in 2:4 is developed by the apostle Paul in the epistle of Romans. The righteous man will live by faith in Romans 1:17 (ibid: 115). Any Bible subject must be considered in the light of other Scripture.

#### **12:2:2:3 The Bible Passage must be interpreted within its context.**

This context is a safeguard against error in interpretation. The passage of Scripture needs to be related to the paragraph that precedes it and to the paragraph that follows it. The passage should be considered in the light of the argument of that particular chapter, the chapters, and the Bible book itself.

#### **12:2:2:4 The Old Testament must be confirmed in the New Testament.**

Solid interpretation is arrived at if the passage found in the Old Testament can be confirmed in the gospels. The gospels are the historical foundation of the faith. If

the Bible's message could be found in the Book of Acts or the epistles. The book of Acts is the experience of the early church. We don't build our bible interpretation on experience. The epistles are the teaching of the church. Interpretation should be confirmed in the gospels or the epistles.

**12:2:2:5 The Old Testament has many inspired lessons for us.**

1 Corinthians 10:6 and Romans 15:4 draw this interpretative principle to our attention. 1 Corinthians 10:6 tells us that they are types (Westcott and Hort 1968:599). Types must be rooted in history. If not, the Bible interpreter will error using the false allegorical method of biblical interpretation. Romans 15:4 presents the truth that what was written before was for our encouragement that we might have hope (ibid:570).

**12:2:2:6 Each book of the Bible is unique.**

Yes, each book is different from the other books. Every bible book has its own distinct character, theme, background, and keywords. Matthew was written to the Jews. The theme is Jesus the King of the Jews (Matt. 27:37). The gospel of Mark was written to the Romans. The theme of this gospel is the Suffering Servant of the prophecy of Isaiah (Mark 10:45). Luke was written to the Greeks. Its theme is the Son of Man emphasizing the humanity of Christ (Luke 19:10). John's gospel has a universal emphasis. Its theme is Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:30-31).

**12:2:2:7 The audience to whom the book is addressed must be considered.**

The historical background of the book must be given primary consideration. Considerable historical background is available on every book of both the Old and New Testaments. The idea that some parts of the Bible are cultural and must be given up is erroneous. The Bible customs and culture against which the Bible book is written must be learned and understood. This is where a good Bible dictionary will avail much to the Bible interpreter (Chafer 1971: 116).

**12:2:2:8 The biblical text must be interpreted in its plain literal sense.**

Allowance must be made for figures of speech which convey literal truth. The interpreter of the Scriptures must not read into the Scriptural passage that which isn't in the text.

**12:2:2:9 Important words in the Bible passage must be considered.**

Meaning is established through usage. A good concordance of the Bible will help in determining the many and varied meanings of different words in Scripture. The use of the particular word in its entirety in the Bible book under study must be given the priority in determining the particular nuance.

**12:2:2:9 The type of literature of each particular Bible book must be considered.**

This will aid interpretation of the Bible passage. The book of Romans and Paul's writings written in a logical fashion with an opposed objector.

**12:2:2:10 The Old Testament predicts and points to the coming of Christ. The New Testament presents the person and work of Jesus Christ.**

**12:2:2:11 The gospels don't have to agree with each other on every point.**

Additional details will be found in other passages that are the same account. Chronology must be considered in Christ's ministry. His first trip to Nazareth could be compared to his second and last trip to Nazareth.

**12:3 In Evaluation**

Scholars have erred in assigning the beginning of hermeneutics with Ezra. It is a Roman Catholic problem which started with the Roman Catholic Council of Trent since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps, this accounts for the landslide of books on hermeneutics. Hermeneutics began with the Roman Catholic position that the Scriptures were unintelligible. Roman Catholic dogma (tradition) was needed to decipher the Scriptures. The Protestant

Reformation's principle of *sola scriptura* was a puzzling problem to their opponents. Flacius, Glassius, and Franz argued that the problem was with the opponents of the Protestant Reformation under Luther and Calvin. Preparation was necessary in the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The allegorical method of biblical interpretation which the Roman Catholic Church embraced since the days of Jerome and Augustine should be rejected along with its mysticism. The literal, historical, grammatical approach to the Scriptures must be embraced.

Hermeneutics is to be distinguished from exegesis and expository preaching as seen in Nehemiah 8:7-8. It was here that the Levites gave the normal plain sense of the Mosaic Law and taught the people. Hermeneutics is to be defined as the principles upon which a passage of Scripture can be arrived at. This will be the intended meaning of the inspired biblical author of the book. These principles are the comparison of Scripture with other Scripture, conferring with the whole of Scripture on the subject [This is the foundation of all hermeneutics]. The Bible text must be interpreted within its context. Attention should be given to the paragraph that precedes and follows the text under study. The Old Testament must be confirmed in the New Testament. The New Testament mustn't be read back into the Old Testament. The New Testament must confirm the Old Testament finding. The Old Testament has inspired historical lessons for us. They were written for our warning, support, and encouragement in addition to their original purpose. The uniqueness of each Bible book must be considered. Each inspired book has its own purpose, theme, setting, biblical customs, the necessary biblical culture, and historical background. The particular book under study has its own key words. The audience to which the Bible book is addressed must be considered. The biblical

interpreter must learn the Bible customs, culture, and the history behind that particular Bible book. The literal meaning that is the plain normal sense must be accepted. Figures of Speech must be allowed for remembering that these too communicate literal truth by transference. Word studies of key terms in the passage will be necessary since they will add clarity to the biblical study. Meaning is determined by usage not by the cognate languages. The nuance of a particular word will be determined by its many uses in the book under study. This may suffice so that usage in a wider context [the same word is used in other Bible books] may not be necessary. A concordance on the Greek Septuagint will help bridge the word gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The type of literature under study be considered. The Old Testament books present individual arguments. Likewise, the New Testament books present arguments to be traced. The gospels don't have to agree with each other on every point. The particular Bible text is like a photograph. The comparison of this passage with other passages in the Scriptures will add additional insight. Bible chronology will add clarity and present a wider picture. An example would be the necessity of distinguishing between Christ's first and second trips to Nazareth.

May the Lord Jesus be pleased to use this chapter to the Glory of God [the Father, the eternal Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit – one God but three distinct and separate persons with the same essence and each one coeternal].

## CHAPTER 13

### BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

#### **13: 1 The Application of Biblical Hermeneutical Principles**

##### **13:1:1 Pragmatism**

Ramm (1970:1) argues that the application of biblical hermeneutics to the study of Scripture will result in the meaning of a Scriptural text. The noun hermeneuo [hermeneutic] is to be translated interpret. (Arndt & Gingrich 1957:309). The previous chapter has outlined the rules to be followed in the interpretation of a biblical text.

**13:1:2 The biblical text should be prepared for the purpose of communicating the message.**

**13:1:2:1** The passage should be translated from the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. If the biblical interpreter doesn't have a working knowledge of these languages then a number of translations should be compared.

**13:1:2:2 The biblical interpreter will make an outline of the translated text.**

**13:1:2:3 The text should then be summarized into a short pithy statement.**

**13:1:2:4 The outline should include a summary of the text.**

**13:1:2:5 Ephesians 1:13-14 will serve as an example of the above.**

**13:1:2:5:1** The message of this text is: the believer has been seated in Christ by the Holy Spirit.

**13:1:2:5:2** The passage should be put within the context of what comes before it in the preceding 12 verses of Ephesians 1. Paul breaks forth into praise in verse 3 to God the Father for He has been the One to bless the believer with all spiritual blessings in the

heavens in Christ. The first blessing set forth is that the Father elected us in Ephesians 1:4 through 1:6. He appointed us to adoption (Arndt & Gingrich 1957:841) through Christ Jesus to Himself according to the pleasure of His will. The second blessing in the heavens in Christ was provided by God the Son [Jesus Christ] is redemption which is found in 1:7-12. The third blessing in the heavens in Christ is marked off by a parenthetical namely that the believer in Christ has been sealed by God the Holy Spirit in Christ in 1:13. The implications of this transaction are set forth in verse 14. The passage that follows the biblical text under study should be considered as well.

**13:1:2:5:3** A short commentary needs to be written on the passage. The Ephesian believers heard the word of truth which is further defined as the gospel of your salvation (1:13). The individual acceptance of Paul's gospel resulted in salvation. The action of the aorist having believed is contemporaneous with the aorist tense having heard. A third verb which is contemporaneous with having heard and having believed is having been sealed (1:13). This aorist passive voice means the action was done to the individual Christian believer in Ephesus when they heard and believed Paul's gospel. The agent of this transaction of sealing is the Holy Spirit of Promise (1:13). The Holy Spirit [the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity] is the down payment of our inheritance to redemption [payment has been made] of His property to the praise of His Glory (1:14) It is always to the praise of the glory of the Father. [There is a definite logical order within the Godhead. The Eternal Son, Jesus Christ always glorified and brought glory to God the Father. The Holy Spirit uplifts the Son of God, Jesus Christ].

**13:1:2:5:4** The passage should be applied to the relevant areas of **Systematic Theology**.

Ephesians 1:13-14 can be applied to Theology Proper [the doctrine of



God the Father], Soteriology [the doctrine of salvation only through Jesus Christ], and Pneumatology [the doctrine of the Holy Spirit].

**13:1:2:5:5 Word studies can be done on the key words in the passage.**

The period of the Classical Greek is from 800-300 B.C. The Greek of the *Greek Septuaginta* is dated at 250 B.C. The Koine Greek is from the historical period of 300 B.C. to 500 A.D. The period of New Testament Greek is from 30 to 90 A.D.

**13:1:2:5:6 Spiritual life applications can be made.**

These will be both evangelistic and personal to the blood bought Christian's life.

**13:1:2:5:7 Textual criticism of the passage may be necessary.**

This can be done based on the external evidence and the internal evidence of the inspired, inerrant passage of the Word of God.

**13:1:2:5:7 The passage should be diagrammed.**

The rewriting of the text separating main clauses from subordinate clauses will be a great aid to the understanding of the biblical interpreter (Mathers 1975:1-13).

## **13:2 Analysis**

**13:2:1** In summary, biblical hermeneutics [the rules for interpreting the Scriptures] must be applied in preparation for correlation [communication]. It should be acknowledged that the term correlation originated and was used differently by Paul Tillich. A translation of the passage should be made at the outset. Next, the translation should be implemented into an outline. The message of the text should be stated in a brief fashion. The outline should include a commentary on the text. Ephesians 1:13-14 served as an example to illustrate all of this. The context is important in which the biblical text is found. Attention should be paid to what

comes before and after the text. The biblical text can be further applied to the areas of the theology that relate to the biblical text. Word studies can be done on the important words in the biblical text. Meaning is determined through usage. The meaning of a word should be determined by all its uses in the biblical book in which the text is found. If the nuance can't be determined by the usage of the biblical book at hand then the use of the word in the rest of the New Testament will need to be studied. A concordance to the Greek Septuagint will be helpful in bridging words from the Old Testament to the the New Testament.

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Published in *Christian Hermeneutics: Dispelling The Myths*. Bloomington: Westbow ( a division of Thomas Nelson).