

LESSON 11

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION AND LITERARY TYPES

Introduction

After surveying the many ways the Bible has been interpreted, what shall we conclude to be the best method or approach to determine the message of the Bible? The principles of interpretation we select will be influenced by certain presuppositions:

- Our concepts concerning the nature of the Bible
- The dependability of man's reason
- The immanence or transcendence of God
- The present activity of the Holy Spirit

Apart from presuppositions, there are certain basic principles which will help in the interpretation of the Bible

Principles of Interpretation

The principle of faith

The Bible cannot be proved or disproved as the Word of God. That it is God's authoritative revelation to us must be accepted by faith. It has been the experience of millions that when they read the Bible, believing it is the Word of God, they have experienced an authentic personal encounter with God. Martin Luther is only one of millions who has come into a personal relationship with the forgiving Father as a result of reading the Bible.

Few attempt to deny the existence of problems in the Old Testament. Even those who believe in verbal inerrancy find it difficult to preach from some of the words which are attributed to Yahweh in the Old Testament. The words have to be understood in their historical situation, and the interpreter must realize that certain verses of the Old Testament do not apply today. The inspiration of the Bible can be accepted by faith without requiring that all of the problems be solved first.

The proportion of faith.—The Reformers spoke of the "analogy of faith" to refute the Roman Church's claim to be the authoritative interpreter of Scripture. The Roman Church claimed to have the only power to interpret Scripture correctly. The Reformers replied with Paul's statement in Romans 12:6 that the ability to prophesy or teach is a gift from God "according to the proportion of faith." Even the measure of faith is given to each person by God (cf. Rom. 12:3). The prophet is endowed with the Spirit of prophecy and is guided to give true interpretation of God's Word. The Reformers seem to have drawn two conclusions from this Scripture: (1) A person is qualified to interpret the Word by faith and not by the approval of an authoritative Church. (2) The interpretations of men of faith will not contain contradictions of doctrine since the one Spirit leads to a unity of doctrine. Luther argued that the interpretations of the Catholic Church were filled with contradictions.

The unity of faith.—Correct interpretation does not lead to contradiction. Obscure Scripture should be interpreted in the light of clear Scripture. If one verse, when interpreted separately, appears to contradict a biblical doctrine, it must be interpreted in

The principle of faith includes accepting the Bible as God's authoritative

_____ by _____.

(revelation, faith)

The "analogy of _____" refuted the C _____ C _____'s claim of sole power to _____ Scriptures.

(faith, Catholic Church, interpret)

According to the unity of faith principle, correct interpretation does not lead to

_____.

(contradictions)

the light of the total teaching of the Scripture. Baptismal regeneration is an example. A few verses in the New Testament could be interpreted to mean that baptism is essential to salvation; however, there are many verses that teach salvation is by grace through faith and baptism is not mentioned. The few verses concerning baptism should not be interpreted in such a way as to contradict the rest of the New Testament. A thousand-year earthly rule of Christ is based on a Scripture which is obscure and difficult to interpret (cf. Rev. 20:1-8). Hermeneutical principles which force the interpretation of other passages to fit one's favourite interpretation of Revelation 20:1-8 are questionable.

The unity of faith principle does not deny the human elements of Scripture. Various writers of different doctrinal emphases give richness to the Scripture. Paul's emphasis on salvation by grace apart from works is complemented by James' emphasis on the responsibility of Christians to work. Luther found the doctrinal position of James and Paul to be contradictory; therefore, he had little regard for James. The Catholic Church has interpreted the New Testament to teach that salvation is based on grace and works or merit. Salvation by works contradicts salvation by grace. The teaching of the total Scripture must be considered in the interpretation of specific verses referring to grace and works.

Some doctrines are so profound that it is difficult for a man to understand and correlate them. Predestination and free will appear contradictory, but both are in the Scripture.

The unity of faith principle emphasizes:

1. Doctrines should not be based on one or even a few verses with obscure meanings.
2. A verse should be interpreted with reference to the total teaching of the Scriptures.
3. Obscure verses should be interpreted in the light of clear Scriptures.
4. The one Spirit guides to a unity in doctrine.

The Christological principle

A theological unity underlying the Old and New Testaments can be expected since both have the same source of origin. The theological unity centres in redemption. Since Christ is the Redeemer, the unity can be defined as a modified Christological unity. The Old Testament Scriptures point to Christ, but every Scripture does not speak directly of Christ. Some interpreters have gone too far in typological interpretation and have typified every mention of "wood" as the cross and "red" as a type of the atonement. New Testament writers used typology to apply many teachings of the Old Testament to Christ; however, their typology was not radical and was usually in the form of examples or illustrations.

The Old Testament prepared for the coming of Christ. The Gospels set forth His earthly activities. The epistles explain the meaning or theological significance of His earthly activities, especially His death and resurrection.

The principle of intended meaning

Authors do not intend that a diversity of meanings should be drawn from what they say or write. The statement of an author attempts to get across one meaning. It may take several statements to explain his meaning, but to assign levels of meaning to his statement is an erroneous approach.

The literal principle is the usual designation for the principle of one level of meaning. The term literal is often misunderstood. To some scholars it means "letterism." Some may advocate

List the four emphases of the unity of faith principle.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(See text for correct answers.)

The Christological principle of interpretation recognizes unity between the _____ and _____.

(Old, New Testaments)

To some scholars, the literal principle means "_____."

(letterism)

taking the visions of the Book of Revelation literally. No interpreter can hold to a literal interpretation of every word. For example, Jesus is called a lamb. The literal meaning of lamb refers to a four-footed creature. Obviously, the word is to be interpreted symbolically. It symbolizes the concepts of innocence and sacrifice. To interpret the word lamb literally misses the concept the author is attempting to communicate. To other scholars, the literal interpretation refers to what the author intends to say. To understand the intended meaning of the author, the interpreter must understand his symbolism. The problem is more difficult when the interpreter attempts to determine whether a thousand-year reign on earth is meant to be symbolical or not.

The principle of grammatical analysis

Words are symbols used in communication. Man uses words to communicate the concepts of his experiences to others. The person who hears or reads words will interpret them according to his own experiences. The word father may represent love and respect for the author because of his pleasant and profitable family relationships, but it may represent fear and hatred for the reader who has had a tyrannical father. Words from man's experiences must be used to describe the spiritual realm. Jesus described God as a father. What concepts about God was He attempting to communicate when He used that term? Was He referring primarily to the origin, protection, support, discipline, love, encouragement, guidance, or authority of God? The task of the interpreter is to determine exactly what Jesus meant and to communicate the concepts in terms which modern listeners will understand. The familiar words love, peace, faith, heaven, and hell are more difficult to interpret and communicate than the beginning biblical student realizes.

To discover the intended meaning of the author, words, phrases, and sentences must be interpreted in their contexts. The word world has different meanings in the expressions "for God so loved the world" and "love not the world." The word flesh in "the infirmity of your flesh," Romans 6:19, does not have the same meaning as in the expression "my flesh is clothed with worms," Job 7:5. Most words have more than one meaning, but a word within its context will usually be limited to one meaning. The place to begin in interpretation is determining the basic, customary, social designation of a word. Words change in meaning. For example, "conversation" in Philippians 1:27 refers to conduct instead of communication.

Words are combined to form sentences. An examination of the grammar of a sentence is essential in understanding the concept of the statement. For example, words used as verbs may refer to past, present, future, or continuous action. Whether Christians sin (1 John 1:8, 10) or do not sin (1 John 3:9) must be determined by an analysis of the grammar.

The interpretation of words and sentences should begin with their normal, usual, customary, and proper meanings. However, words which usually refer to material concepts may refer to spiritual concepts when used in Scripture. The word flesh conveys a material concept, but Paul used it to speak of a spiritual concept. Spiritual designations and figurative speech are to be distinguished from hidden meanings. Spiritual and figurative speech usually refer to obvious designations. Errors arise when the interpreter looks for several hidden meanings in a figure of speech.

Spiritual language must be employed to refer to reality which is beyond the physical or natural. The distinction, however, is not always clear. Does heaven refer to a particular physical place in space or to a condition of relationship to God?

To some scholars, the literal principle refers to the intended _____ of the _____.

(meaning, author)

The meaning of words must be interpreted in their _____ in order to discover the intended _____ of the author. Words change in _____.

(context, meaning, meaning)

Words which usually refer to material concepts may refer to _____ concepts in the _____.

Figurative speech usually refers to obvious _____ and not to hidden _____.

(spiritual, Scriptures, designations, meanings)

Words used to convey physical reality may also be used to convey _____.

(spiritual concepts)

If heaven is not a place in space, can it be real? These questions are debated by scholars and are foremost problems in hermeneutics; however, the answers are based more on the philosophy of linguistics than biblical exegesis.

The intended meaning of the author requires the interpreter to recognize the author's use of allegories (Gal. 4), parables and metaphors (the Synoptics), types (the Book of Hebrews), prophecy (Matt. 24), and apocalyptic literature (Revelation). The interpretation of types of literature will be discussed later.

The historical principle

The interpreter must discover what the text and context he is interpreting meant to the original recipients. In addition to examining the language and style, he must consider the historical circumstances of the readers to whom the Scripture was addressed. The meaning of Isaiah 40ff. would have a different meaning for eighth century B.C. readers who had not experienced exile than for the discouraged fifth century B.C. Babylonian exiles. Our understanding of John's message in Revelation will be affected by our understanding of the conditions of the people to whom it was originally written. The problems of the churches to whom Paul wrote must be understood to interpret the messages of his epistles.

The historical or cultural principle includes the way, the method, and the manner by which people carried on their daily lives. Economic conditions and customs are important. The agrarian culture prohibited the lending of money for profit which is a vital part of our economic system. An understanding of social customs is important. The "double portion" of the inheritance going to the oldest son and his responsibility to take care of his aging parents and their burial are customs underlying many Old and New Testament Scriptures. The modern practices of insurance and social security must be considered in outlining contemporary responsibilities of children to provide for parents.

The interpreter needs to know geography of biblical lands. A knowledge of the geography of Egypt contributes to an understanding of the various plagues. The strategic location of Corinth as a shipping port affected the moral situation within the church in Corinth. The wilderness journey cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of the geography of the land.

A knowledge of the political history is important. The Bible alludes to a change of rulers in Egypt during the time of Joseph which greatly affected the lives of the Israelites in Egypt. The relation of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms cannot be understood apart from Syriac, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian military and political history. Rowley has aptly stated that history cannot be ignored in a religion which is rooted and grounded in history.¹

The principle of criticism

Criticism is not to be equated with scepticism as some biblical scholars tend to do. Radical criticism which undermines the authority of the Bible should be avoided; however, the Bible should not be protected from a critical study. The correct use of this principle requires an adequate justification for the interpretation of a passage. An adequate justification may be based on the grammatical, theological, or historical-cultural principles of interpretation.²

The interpreter must determine what the Scriptures meant to the original _____.
The historical principle includes knowledge about the _____ circumstances of the recipients.

(recipients, historical)

_____ conditions and customs are important to interpretation.
(Economic)

An interpreter needs to understand the _____ of the original readers.

(social customs)

The interpreter needs to know the geography of _____ lands.
(biblical)

A knowledge of the _____ history is important.
(political)

¹ H. H. Rowley, "The Relevance of Biblical Interpretation," *Interpretation* (1:10-11, Jan., 1947), p. 8.

² See Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 101ff., for a fuller discussion.

The word criticism comes from a word which means "to judge or evaluate." Lower criticism evaluates the texts of translations which have come down to us to determine the words of the original text. Scholars employ scientific methods in the reconstruction of a text, and they have made great progress in restoring the text of the original writings. Archaeological studies have contributed much to a more reliable text.

Higher criticism (the study of authorship, date, and purpose) has established that New Testament writings were completed by the end of the first century. There is still much disagreement concerning the origin of Old Testament books. The determination of the historical background, the purpose of the author, and the identity of the recipients of the books is necessary to understand properly the message.

Physical scientists subject their theories to criticism to determine if the hypotheses are relevant to all the known facts and are workable. If a hypothesis fails to stand the tests to which it has been subjected, it is rejected. The same approach should be used in biblical interpretation. Using the Pentateuch as an example, the following facts are obvious:

Sections of the books claim to be the work of Moses.

The Jews, Jesus, and the apostles considered Moses to be the author of the Pentateuch, but certain phrases indicate that some statements are later than Moses.

A theory concerning the authorship of the Pentateuch should be based on all the known facts.

The interpreter should not defend traditional views just because they are traditional; neither should he ignore traditions and hastily embrace radical and new conclusions. It is possible that we misunderstand ancient customs. For example, authorship in the days of Moses may have referred to the original source of the material rather than to the composer of a manuscript. Even today revised works are attributed to the original author. There is much that we do not understand concerning the customs and concepts of cultures previous to the scientific age and the printing press.

The theological principle

The books of the Bible were written to interpret the grace of God as it reaches out to man in need. They were not written primarily to record historical events. God acted in history, and His actions were theologically interpreted. The Gospels were not simply historical accounts of the life of Christ. The Gospel writers used historical events to present theological truths. The miracles proved the divinity and love of Christ. The atonement through Christ's death is the theological meaning of the death of a Jew who was crucified by the Romans outside of Jerusalem. Many men died on crosses, and their deaths had no theological significance. The interpreter should focus on the theological truths presented and not on the question of the accuracy of historical details.

The principle of progressive revelation

The principle of progressive revelation is not the same as the evolutionary theory. Progressive revelation refers to the process by which God prepared His chosen people for his highest revelation in Jesus Christ. His highest revelation was not in the Law; however, the Law was one stage in the preparation for the coming of Christ. The ethical teaching of the prophets was another stage. The Exile prepared the Jewish people to look for a Messiah sent by God. Abraham's age was not ready for the Messiah. The people needed the sacrificial law and the expectancy of the Messiah to be able to interpret the life and death of Jesus.

*Lower criticism evaluates the texts of translations to determine the _____ of the _____ text.
(words, original)*

*Higher criticism is the study of _____, and _____.
(authorship, date, and purpose)*

*The theological principle says that the Bible was written to interpret the _____ of God reaching out to _____ and not simply to record _____ events.
(grace, man, historical)*

The evolutionary theory of religion presupposes that the early religion of Abraham was primitive and was superseded by later developments. This view reduces the revelatory value of the early parts of the Old Testament. It understands progress and religion to be the result of man's accomplishment of evolving to a higher social and intellectual level. Progressive revelation emphasizes that the developments from Abraham to Christ are God's accomplishments. The early parts of the Old Testament, however, must be understood as incomplete revelation. A doctrine of God based only on the periods of Joshua and the Judges is incomplete. The fullness of God's nature can be known only in His highest revelation through Christ.

Interpreting Different Types of Literature

The Law

The Law may be divided into three types: ceremonial, civil, and moral. Since Israel did not distinguish between religious and political institutions, civil law was mixed with religious law. The book of Leviticus is concerned primarily with ceremonial laws relating to the priesthood; however, some sections serve as the basis for civil law (cf. Lev. 18ff.).

Old Testament civil and moral laws are the bases of the laws of many countries. Several laws are still valuable as sources for judicial principles, but the principles must be given new forms of expression since social and political patterns have changed.

According to the Book of Hebrews, the ceremonial law was a shadow of Christ. The shadow has been replaced by the reality of Christ and His redemptive act. Ceremonial laws are fulfilled; therefore, the Church does not observe the sacrificial laws and festivals. The ceremonial laws were applied to Christ largely by using typology. It is suggested that the interpreter should not go beyond the typology employed by the author of Hebrews.

Christ did not replace the Law, but He brought it to its fulfillment. The moral law continues to be binding, but Christ put into it a new level of meaning and application. He dealt with the root of ethical activity by including attitudes and motives (the heart of man). The emphasis of Christian conduct was shifted from external acts to the motives behind those acts. Paul rejected the legalistic interpretation of the Law but not the Law itself. He, as well as Jesus, saw that the Law must be interpreted to apply to the heart of man.

Historical narratives

The Old and New Testaments have much historical material. The historical event is usually described and an interpretation is given. The environmental conditions of the event need to be understood before the implications of the interpretation have their fullest meaning. The historical principle, as previously discussed, can be used in understanding the cultural situation. The most obvious meaning of the historical narrative is the literal. From the event, the writer concludes theological truths. The interpreter should strive to understand correctly the theological principles and apply them to his contemporary situation.

Sketches of the history of the reigns of kings are given to show that the blessings or sufferings of Israel and Judah were the result of righteous or evil actions of the king and the people. The history of Israel was in the control of God who required His people to live righteously and to serve Him faithfully. The repeated statements "and he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father" (1 Kings 15:26, etc.) and "the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of His sight" (2 Kings 17:18) are interpretations of historical events by the writer.

The evolutionary theory holds that doctrines evolved from p _____ to h _____ social and i _____ levels. Progressive revelation emphasizes that the divine revelation of the Old Testament is i _____.

(primitive, higher, intellectual, incomplete)

The ceremonial law has been fulfilled in _____.

(Christ)

Christ's fulfilment of the Law means, He gave a new level of _____ and _____ to the moral law.

(meaning, application)

Hebrew poetry

The Jews considered the books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Job to be poetry. The emphasis of Hebrew poetry is on thought or logical rhythm instead of sound or phonic rhythm. The most important characteristic is parallelism of thought. Three terms have been used to describe parallelism:

1. Synonymous—The second line repeats the thought expressed in the first line (cf. Ps. 83:14).
2. Antithetic—Two portions of a line are contrasted (cf. Prov. 1:29). The same idea is sometimes expressed positively first, then negatively (cf. Ps. 90:6).
3. Synthetic—The second line carries the thought a step beyond the first line (cf. Ps. 1:1, 2:3).

The Hebrew language is suited for the poetical expression of profound religious insights and convictions. Hebrew poetry uses recurrence of thought to stress the goodness of God, the dignity and worth of man, and the right relation of man to his neighbour.

Prophetic literature

Disagreement concerning the interpretation of prophetic literature stems from two facts: the language is sometimes ambiguous, and presuppositions concerning the nature of prophetic literature are often wrong. The writings of the prophets contain much about the future, but their messages were primarily to the people of their day. They were primarily "forth tellers" instead of "foretellers."

The grammatical-historical situation of a prophetic message should be examined first. The interpreter needs to know exactly what the prophet said and the circumstances under which he made the statement. He also needs to know the situation of the people to whom the statement was made first. Daniel was written with regard to a particular historical situation, and his message cannot be properly understood apart from knowing something about the historical situation.

The interpreter should note the figurative, poetic, and symbolical elements of a prophetic passage. Prophecy frequently abounds in peculiar words and expressions. It alludes to contemporary life and past history. The prophets used many terms figuratively to describe the future, such as earth, earthquake, sea and river, stars of heaven, and the darkening of the sun and moon. Sometimes they used the language of past historical events to describe a future event. For example, judgement finds its type in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Not all prophecy should be limited to its immediate fulfilment in history. The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 40ff. may have referred initially to Israel, but it was later applied to Christ and the Church. Certainly the ultimate meaning of Isaiah 53 refers to Jesus Christ.

Sometimes predictive prophecy is conditional. A prophecy of judgement would not come true if the nation repented (cf. Jer. 18:8). The interpreter should not expect some conditional prophecies to be fulfilled in the future. Some prophecies were fulfilled in Old Testament times, others in New Testament times, and others are still to be fulfilled.

Ramm suggests that the interpreter should take the literal meaning of a prophetic passage as his limiting or controlling guide.³ Literalism, however, should not be forced. A. B. Davidson objected to the millennial restitution of the Old Testament

*The emphasis of Hebrew poetry is on _____
or _____ rhythm instead of sound
or phonic _____.*

(thought, logical, rhythm)

*The writings of the prophets contain much
about the future, but their messages were
primarily to the people of their _____.*

(day)

*Some predictive prophecy is conditional and
a _____ should not be expected.
Some prophecy has already been _____.
Some prophecy is yet to be _____.*

(fulfilment, fulfilled, fulfilled)

³ *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 234.

worship system and the restoration of Israel's ancient enemies.⁴ A strict literal interpretation would require that David sit on the millennial throne rather than Christ.

Interpretation of prophetic literature must avoid Philo's, Clement's, and Origen's allegorizing and the Christian Scientists' spiritualizing. It must also avoid a typological exegesis which can find New Testament truths in any Old Testament Scripture. However, New Testament writers did consider the Old Testament to be a book about Christ. Many of the Scriptures applying to Christ were interpreted typologically. Contemporary typological exegesis should not go beyond the implied and stated teachings of the New Testament. The interpreter should remember that typological exegesis is not the literal meaning of the Scripture, but it must always be based on the literal meaning. Typological exegesis does not require the fulfilment of prophecy to be in the exact form of the prophecy. Jesus Himself changed the expectations of Israel from national to universal concern. Since the Kingdom of God includes more than Israel, some adjustments are required between the form of original prophecy and its fulfilment.

Several Old Testament concepts were used typologically in the New Testament. The calling of the Hebrew people is typical of the heavenly calling of the Christians (Heb. 3:1). Jerusalem is typical of the heavenly city (Heb. 12:22). The old Israel is typical of the new Israel of faith or the Church (cf. Gal. 6:16). Abraham by typological interpretation is father of all Christians (Rom. 4:16). Ramm suggests that prophecy should be interpreted literally unless the implicit or explicit teaching of the New Testament suggests typological interpretation.⁵

Apocalyptic literature

Apocalyptic literature uses symbolic language to set forth prophecy. Although it has a historical foundation, it is impossible to interpret apocalyptic literature literally. A literal interpretation of Revelation would mean that Jesus actually had a sword coming out of His mouth.

Apocalyptic writings are impressionistic. Every effort should be made to discover what meaning the imagery had to the original recipients. Sometimes the meaning of the imagery is given by the writer. Some parts of the Book of Revelation use symbols from the Old Testament.

The parables

A parable is an earthly story used to teach a heavenly truth. It is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life to illustrate a spiritual truth. Most of the parables of Jesus were given to set forth truths about the Kingdom of God. The parables concealed the truth from the spiritually unresponsive and illuminated the truth for the spiritually responsive.

The key principle to interpreting parables is to focus on the central truth. The details of the story are usually incidental. The details give local colouring to the stories, but spiritual parallels should not be sought for each detail. Parables are not to be interpreted like allegories which do contain spiritual meanings and applications in the details.

⁴ Quoted by Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 235.

⁵ *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 247.

What is a parable? _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The key principle to interpreting parables is to _____ on the _____.

However, spiritual parallels should not be sought for each _____.

(focus, central truth, detail)

The central truth of the parable can be discovered by understanding the context in which it is given. Jesus often used parables to answer questions. The question gives the key to the central truth. The three parables concerning the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son of Luke 15 grew out of a situation in which the publicans and sinners drew near to hear Jesus. The Pharisees and scribes complained saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." The central truth of the parables is the love and concern of the Heavenly Father for the lost.

Conclusion

Interpretation should be distinguished from application. Interpretation refers to the meaning of the Scripture to the people to whom it was originally given. Once the interpretation is clearly understood, the Scripture may be applied to various contemporary situations. Care should be taken to avoid misinterpreting a passage in order to draw a desired application from it. The ultimate purpose of interpretation is to apply these divine truths to contemporary situations. The interpreter is as obligated to make correct applications as he is to make correct interpretations.

INTERPRETATION has to do with the _____
of the Scripture to its original _____.

APPLICATION has to do with _____
the Scripture to various _____
situations.

*(meaning, recipients or readers, applying,
contemporary)*

Home Study Exercises

Basic assignment (for Levels 1, 2, and 3)

1. (Underline the correct ending for the following sentence.) The principle of faith includes—
 - (1) accepting the Bible as God’s authoritative revelation by faith.
 - (2) proving the Bible to be the Word of God.
 - (3) requiring a solution to the problems of the Old Testament.

2. Why did the Reformers appeal to the analogy of faith? _____

3. List four emphases of the unity of faith principle. _____

4. What principle of interpretation recognizes unity between the Old and New Testaments? _____

5. What are two interpretations of the literal principle? _____

6. Give two reasons the meaning of words must be interpreted in context. _____

7. Tell whether each statement is *true* or *false* by writing T or F by each.
- (1) Words referring to material concepts may not be used to refer to spiritual concepts._____
 - (2) Words which are used in figurative speech usually have hidden meanings._____
 - (3) Words which are used to convey concepts of physical reality may also be used to convey spiritual concepts._____
8. What are four areas of historical background which are needed in interpretation?_____
9. Give two types of criticism which are important to biblical studies. _____
10. Why is the theological principle important?_____
11. (Underline the correct ending for the following sentence.) The principle of progressive revelation means that—
- (1) doctrines evolved from primitive to sophisticated levels.
 - (2) God is the author of all Scripture; therefore, the Old Testament is as valuable as the New Testament for doctrine.
 - (3) the divine revelation of the Old Testament is partial and incomplete.
12. Is all of the Law binding today? Why? _____
13. (Underline the correct ending for the following sentence.) Christ's fulfilment of the moral law means that—
- (1) the Ten Commandments are no longer binding.
 - (2) Christ gave a new level of meaning and application to the moral law.
 - (3) Christ abolished the Old Testament Law and established a new law.
14. What is the emphasis of Hebrew poetry? _____
15. Name three possibilities to be considered in interpreting predictive prophecy. _____
16. What is a parable? _____
17. What is the key principle for interpreting parables? _____

Supplementary assignment (for Levels 2 and 3)

1. Does the Church keep all of the Law? Give illustrations and support for your answer.
2. Interpret the parable of the tares.

Advanced assignment (for Level 3)

Read and outline pages 185–204 (chap. 15) in Grant's *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*.

Seminar Discussion

1. What is the difference between intended meaning and literal meaning?
2. A student who has done the advanced activities will be asked to present the key hermeneutical concepts of Grant.
3. Which do you consider to be the most important principle of interpretation? Why?