

Definitions:

Hermeneutics: The systematic study of the principles and methods of interpretation of the Bible; rules or principles for discovering the meaning of a text.

Exegesis: Explaining the meaning of the text; i.e. what the author meant when he wrote to the people of his day.

Homiletics: Practical application of the meaning of the text for us today.

Eisegesis: Reading a meaning into the text which was not in the original, usually due to the bias of the interpreter

Exegesis uses Hermeneutic principles to prepare Homiletical communication. We avoid Eisegesis.

Principles of Historical-Grammatical Hermeneutics

1. Each passage has only one meaning. Even prophecies have one meaning, though it could be both an immediate meaning and a remote meaning.
2. The simplest, most obvious meaning of any text is usually the correct one. So read the text for its plain and obvious meaning first.
3. The author's own explanation takes precedence. (e.g. In Daniel, the various animals are said to stand for particular nations. Therefore, don't redefine the animals allegorically.) Seek to discern the writer's intentions when he wrote the text.
4. The context of the passage gives us the foundation for interpretation. That is, we interpret a passage in harmony with the context of the passage.
5. The socio-economic-religious-historical context of the author shapes the interpretation.
6. The interpretation of each passage must be in harmony with all other passages in that book and in other books by that author, as well as with the theology of Scripture.
7. Often one passage will help interpret or shed light on another passage. Use plain passages to unpack the meaning of difficult passages on the same subject.
8. If there are any idioms in the passage or literary devices, interpret the passage in light of how that idiom was used at that time (e.g. repetition for emphasis, comparison or contrast, indication of importance or timing).
9. Don't draw a general conclusion on any Bible subject until you have studied all the Bible passages on that subject.
10. Don't emphasize one passage over another to make the theological point you prefer. Use all passages on the same topic in balance with one another.
11. Identify genre (narrative, history, parable, fable, allegory, proverb, prophecy, apocalyptic declaration, poetry, wisdom literature, etc.)
12. Distinguish figurative passages from literal passages.
13. Identify figures of speech. While the list is long, in most passages there are only a few.

- a. simile
 - b. metaphor
 - c. riddle
 - d. hyperbole
 - e. irony & sarcasm
 - f. metonymy: a concept or a thing is identified by something closely related to the concept or thing.
 - g. personification or anthropomorphism
 - h. rhetorical question
 - i. hendiadys: The combination of two or three things to express the same meaning
 - j. meiosis: understating one thing to magnify another
 - k. euphemism
 - l. antithesis: posing opposites against each other
 - m. synecdoche: the part stands for the whole or the whole stands for the part
14. Identify any types or symbols (e.g. the bread and the wine representing the body and blood of Christ; the rainbow being a symbol of God's mercy and faithfulness to man; Melchizedek as a priestly type of Christ).
 15. Seek the original meaning of a word. The writer's definition of the word is the best. Study what the word meant in the lifetime of the author.
 16. For a word with many meanings, look at how that word was used at the time of composition, look at the context, and compare similar or parallel passages that use that word.
 17. Observe the various theological themes in the text. Though a text has one intended meaning, it can have a number of significant theological themes. It can also have a number of different applications.
 18. Take a God-centered perspective in interpreting the text. Look at the text in terms of what it reveals about God and His dealings with man and all of creation.

Hermeneutic Type	Hermeneutic Method	Hermeneutic Example
Paul's use of the OT	Literal-Historical-Grammatical	In Romans 9, Paul quotes the OT 11 times and interprets the OT verses literally, not allegorically or mystically.
<p>Allegorical Interpretation: The School of Alexandria</p> <p>Was continued into the Roman Catholic Church via Augustine and others</p>	<p>Points to a hidden or symbolic parallel meaning in passages by correlating certain elements, such as people, things, and happenings in the story with another realm or level of meaning.</p> <p>"...its habit is to disregard the common signification of words and give wing to all manner of fanciful speculation. It does not draw out the legitimate meaning of an author's language, but foists into it whatever whim or fancy of an interpreter may desire." (Milton Terry, <i>Biblical Hermeneutics</i>)</p>	<p>The feeding of the 5000 with five loaves and two fish:</p> <p>"They said to Him, "<i>The time is past,</i>" (Mt. 14:15) as if <i>the fitting season of the law and prophets had passed.</i> Perhaps they spoke this saying, in reference to the word of Jesus, that <i>because of the beheading of John both the law and the prophets who were until John had ceased.</i> . . .</p> <p>The disciples said, We have here but five loaves and two fishes (Mt. 14:17) Perhaps by <i>the five loaves</i> they meant to make <i>a veiled reference to the sensible words of the Scriptures, corresponding in number on this account to the five senses,</i> but by the <i>two fishes</i> either to <i>the word expressed and the word conceived,</i> which are a relish, so to speak, to the sensible things contained in the Scriptures; or, perhaps, to <i>the word which had come to them about the Father and the Son.</i>" (Origen, AD 200-250)</p>
<p>Historical/Grammatical: The School of Antioch</p> <p>(Began as a reaction to the hermeneutics of the school of Alexandria)</p>	<p>Looked for the literal meaning of the words using a careful textual and grammatical reading method. Also recognized symbols, types, figures of speech and literary genres.</p>	<p>The feeding of the 5000 with five loaves and two fish:</p> <p>The time is past = it is late. 5 loaves = 5 loaves of bread 2 fish = 2 fish (John Chrysostom, AD 381-407)</p>
Mystical: Gnostics	<p>Took the Allegorical method one step further and looked for hidden or secret meanings "in" the text.</p>	
<p>Monastic Period (AD 500-800)</p> <p>-believed that there were four meanings to each text.</p>	<p>Looked for four meanings:</p> <p><i>Literal/Historical:</i> What the passage says about past events</p> <p><i>Allegorical:</i> What the passage tells us about Christ or our future</p> <p><i>Moral:</i> What the passage teaches us about how to live; looks downward to man</p> <p><i>Mystical:</i> What the passage tells us about spiritual powers or the after-life; looks upward to God</p>	<p>The Crossing of the Red Sea</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Literal meaning: Moses and Israel actually crossed it. 2. Allegorical meaning: represents our baptism and new life. 3. Moral meaning: we crossover from life's difficulties (Egypt) into our personal earthly blessings (Promise Land). 4. Mystical meaning: eschatologically referring to the final crossing-over from death to eternal life in heaven.
<p>Literal/Historical/Grammatical: Post-Reformation Conservative</p>	<p>The Reformers (Luther, Calvin, et al) returned to the interpretive methods of Paul and the school of Antioch. The return to studying scriptures in their original languages, rather than in Latin, advanced this approach. The conservative church maintained this method through today</p>	

<p>Historical/Critical: Liberal church, 1850s-now</p>	<p>Begun by men who denied the supernatural (no miracles, etc.) and who believed the Bible to be a compilation of many men's writings edited together later by men intending to build a religion. Uses certain vocabulary to assign "sources" to books, assigns dates to those sources, then interprets text in light of the culture at that posited time. Often takes the position that there is no absolute truth, so meaning is always negotiable.</p>	<p>The feeding of the 5000 and the feeding of the 4000:</p> <p>One event retold over time became altered into two versions, then both versions were recorded. May be true or may be an inflated tale to establish a case for the divinity of the man Jesus. Can be interpreted in light of the benefactor stories of that day: God, the rich benefactor sends food to the poor through the broker, Jesus. Carries the message that Christians are to have compassion for the needs of others.</p>
---	---	--