

Module 3: The Word

Illumination and Interpretation - Part 1

1. Illumination

Literally, to supply or brighten with light.

Psalm 18:28

For it is you who light my lamp; the Lord my God lightens my darkness.



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Biblical illumination is the process by which the Holy Spirit helps a person to understand the truth of God's Word.



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Review

Revelation relates to content of Bible

Inspiration relates to the method of recording it

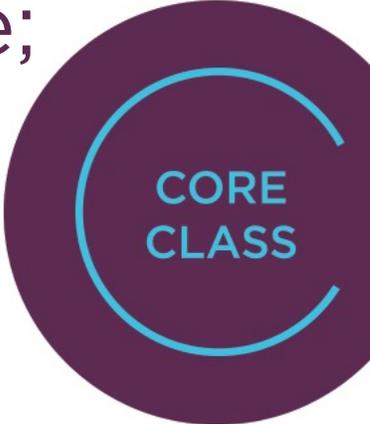
Illumination relates to the meaning of the Bible



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John 16:13-15

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.



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- The Spirit is our teacher.
- His teaching encompasses “all the truth.”
- His purpose in illumination is to glorify Christ, not himself.



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Ephesians 4:11-12

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.



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1 Corinthians 3:1-3

"But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?"



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Ephesians 1:17-18

...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.



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2. Interpretation



2. Interpretation

The Need for Interpretation (Hermeneutics)



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2. Interpretation

The Need for Interpretation (Hermeneutics)

1. Historical Gap
2. Cultural Gap
3. Linguistic Gap



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The History of Interpretation

1. **Jesus/Apostles** - normal historical/grammatical method
2. **Church fathers** - increasing allegorical method
3. **Reformers** - return to historical/grammatical method
4. **Modern Liberalism** - rejects the Bible as revelation



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General Advice

1. Work from the assumption that the Bible is authoritative.
2. Church history is important, but not decisive in the interpretation of Scripture.
3. Saving faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary for us to understand and properly interpret the Scripture.



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General Advice

4. Interpret personal experience in light of Scripture, and not Scripture in light of personal experience.
5. Pray for understanding.
6. Each Christian has the right and responsibility to interpret the word of God for him/herself.



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History and Culture

1. What was the author intending to communicate to the specific people to whom he was writing?
2. How would the reader of that day understand the writer?
3. What were the historical and cultural surroundings of the writer and his audience?
4. Who was the book written to?

History and Culture

5. What was the author's purpose in writing the book?
6. What was the audience's level of spiritual commitment and theological understanding?
7. What cultural circumstances and norms might add meaning to given actions?
8. Useful tools: Bible dictionaries, encyclopedia and atlases.

Context

1. How does the passage fit into its immediate context?
2. Almost always there is a logical connection from one verse or passage to the next.
3. How does the verse or passage relate to the material around it?
4. How does the verse or passage relate to the book as a whole?
5. The immediate context is the final authority as to the meaning of a word or verse.

Words and Grammar



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3. What are the connecting words, and how do they show a progression of thought?

Words and Grammar

1. Identify the multiple meanings a word possesses in its time and culture.
 - a. How is the word used in other passages and in secular literature?
 - b. Study synonyms
 - c. Study the word's root
 - d. Useful tools

Words and Grammar

1. Determine the single meaning intended by the author in a given context. Again, the context determines which possible meaning is correct.
 - a. Look for explanatory phrases
 - b. Subject and predicate may explain each other
 - c. Look for parallelism

Words and Grammar

2. Is the word a figure of speech or used figuratively?
 - a. When an inanimate object is used to describe a living being, the statement may be considered figurative.
 - b. When a statement is out of character with the thing described, the statement may be considered figurative.
 - c. When at all possible, a passage should be interpreted literally.

Words and Grammar

1. How does grammar contribute to the understanding of the passage?
2. Useful tools
 - a. Interlinear Bibles
 - b. Analytical lexicons
 - c. Hebrew and Greek grammars
 - d. The Wuest translation
 - e. Computer software - Logos



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How does this passage fit into the total pattern of God's revelation?

1. God's revelation is progressive in time.
2. The way God has worked in history has been basically the same, but there are differences, especially between the Old and New Testaments.
3. The law of Moses, as a code of law, is not for believers today.
4. One's understanding of Dispensational versus Covenant theology has immense implications on how one interprets the Bible.



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Determine the Literary Style

1. Look for explicit references which indicate the author's intent regarding the style he was using.
2. Study the characteristics of the passage to ascertain its form.
3. Apply the principles of literary devices carefully, but not rigidly.
 - a. Simile
 - b. Metaphor

Literary Styles

1. Proverbs

- a. Characteristic: comparison expressed or unexpressed
- b. Interpretation: Usually a single point of similarity or contrast

Literary Styles

2. Parables

- a. Characteristics: an extended simile. Comparisons are expressed and kept separate. The story and its meaning are consciously separated.
- b. Interpretation: determine the focal meaning of the story, and show how the details fit naturally into that focal teaching.

Literary Styles

3. Allegories

- a. Characteristics: an extended metaphor. Comparisons are unexpressed and intermingled. The story and its meaning are carried along together.
- b. Interpretation: determine the multiple points of comparison intended by the author.

Literary Styles

4. Types

Characteristics:

- a. There must be some notable resemblance or analogy between the type and antitype.
- b. There must be some evidence that the type was appointed by God to represent the thing typified.
- c. A type must prefigure something in the future.
- d. Classes of the type and its antitype: persons, events, institutions, offices and actions.

Literary Styles

4. Types

Interpretation:

- a. Determine the significance within the time and culture of both the type and its antitype.
- b. Search the text for points of correspondence between the type and its antitype as they relate to salvation history.
- c. Note the important points of difference between the type and its antitype.



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Literary Styles

5. Prophecy

Characteristics:

- a. Be aware that the style is generally figurative and symbolic.
- b. Watch for supernatural elements such as information conveyed by the announcement of angels, by visions, or by other supernatural means.
- c. Notice the emphasis on the unseen world that lies behind the action of the visible world.



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Literary Styles

5. Prophecy

Interpretation:

- a. Determine the specific historical situation surrounding the composition of the writing. Study intervening history to see whether or not the prophecy has been fulfilled.
- b. Study parallel passages or other cycles within the same prophecy for further information.
- c. Analyze whether this passage is part of a progressive prediction, is capable of developmental fulfillment, or includes prophetic telescoping.



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Literary Styles

The Biblical Authors Also Employ:

- **Irony** (2 Samuel 12:1-13)
- **Foreshadowing** (Hebrews 10:1)
- **Imagery** or mental image (Revelation 12:1)
- **Personification** (Proverbs 1:20-21)
- **Allusion**, or passing reference to something that requires the reader to make a connection (John 8:58 requires a prior knowledge of the meaning and significance of the phrase “I Am”.)



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Comparison with Others

1. Compare your thoughts with those of other interpreters.
2. Modify, correct, or expand your interpretation as appropriate.



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Summarizing the Bible's Teaching of a Topic

1. A teaching cannot be considered biblical unless it sums up all that the Scriptures say about it.
2. When two teachings in the Bible appear to be contradictory, accept both as scriptural in the confident belief they will resolve themselves into a higher unity.
3. A teaching merely implied in Scripture may be considered biblical when comparison of related passages supports it (e.g. the Trinity).



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Key Issues of Hermeneutics

1. Presuppositions: What presuppositions do I carry with me?
2. Perspective: Who determines the meaning or intent?
3. Point: What is the point of the passage?
4. Genre
5. Purpose
6. Content
7. Context
8. Flow of thought



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Key Issues of Hermeneutics

9. Purpose: What is the meaning vs. significance?

Meaning

Historical foundation

Does not change

Author's intent for text

Significance

Contemporary relevance

Truth adapted to each generation

Author's intent for the truth



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Key Issues of Hermeneutics

10. Prophecy: Does God intend for his word to convey more than the original readers could comprehend?

(Yes - example: Daniel 12:8-9)



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Key Issues of Hermeneutics

11. Fulness of meaning (sensus plenior)“ the fuller sense”
 - a. Principle: What is to be transferred and in what manner?
 - b. Transform into a universal principle
 - c. Conform pattern to present culture
 - d. Ignore. Passage is not applicable
 - e. Practice: How will I apply it?
(Ex. Head coverings: 1 Corinthians 11)

15 Rules of Biblical Interpretation

By Josh McDowell

1. The unexplained is not necessarily unexplainable
2. Fallible interpretations do not mean fallible revelation
3. Understand the context of the passage
4. Interpret difficult passages in the light of clear ones
5. Don't base teaching on obscure passages

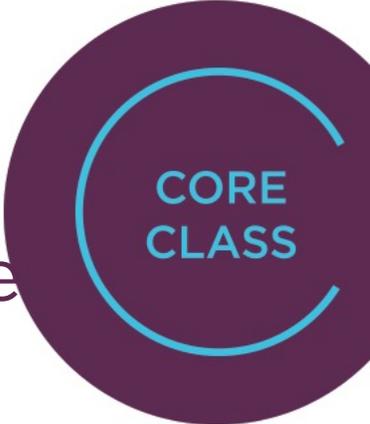


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15 Rules of Biblical Interpretation

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6. The Bible is a human book with human characteristics
7. Just because a report is incomplete does not mean it is false.
8. New Testament citations of the Old Testament need not always be exact
9. The Bible does not necessarily approve of all its records
10. The Bible uses non-technical, everyday language



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15 Rules of Biblical Interpretation

By Josh McDowell

11. The Bible may use round numbers as well as exact numbers
12. Note when the Bible uses different literary devices
13. An error in a copy does not equate to an error in the original
14. General statements don't necessarily mean universal promises
15. Later revelation supersedes previous revelation



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