

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE FOR ALL ITS WORTH

A SURVEY OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION BASED ON THE BOOK BY GORDON D. FEE & DOUGLAS STUARTⁱ

CLASS GOALS

- Understand why biblical interpretation is necessary
- Explore different types of Bible translations
- Identify key literary genres of the Bible
- Describe key elements of the historical context of each of the major biblical literary genres
- Learn how to approach the literary context of each of the major biblical literary genres
- Encounter both good and bad examples of biblical interpretation in each major literary genre

CLASS OUTLINE

June 4 – The Need to Interpret, Bible Translations, Old Testament Narrative

June 11 – The Law, Psalms, Wisdom, Prophecy

June 18 – Gospels, Parables, Epistles

June 25 – Revelation, Evaluation and Use of Commentaries

REVIEW

- Scripture will be interpreted by whoever reads it, so we should endeavor to interpret well.
- The best interpretation is the plain meaning of the text.
- The Bible is the word of God given in the words of people in history.
- The Bible cannot mean what it never meant. It has a context.
- There are two main categories of context we can consider:
 - Historical: geographical, topographical, political, author's reason for writing
 - Literary: genre, discourse structure, grammar
- Old Testament Narratives:
 - Aren't about what should've happened; they are about what happened
 - Don't teach doctrine directly, but do clearly illustrate doctrines taught explicitly elsewhere
 - Don't always provide examples of how to live
 - May have good or bad endings
 - Have God as the hero
- Two aspects of interpretation: exegesis and hermeneutics

Exegesis

Historical particularity

Original context

Original meaning

Application for original audience

Hermeneutics

Eternal relevance

Present-day context

Original meaning (for me)

Application for reader

A. OLD TESTAMENT LAW

1. The Old Testament law is a covenant. (150)
2. The Old Testament is not our testament/covenant. (151)
3. Some stipulations of the Old Covenant have clearly not been renewed in the New Covenant. (152)
4. Part of the Old Covenant is renewed in the New Covenant. (153)
5. All of the Old Testament law is still the Word of God for us even though it is not still the command of God to us. (153)
6. Only that which is explicitly renewed from the Old Testament law can be considered part of the New Testament “law of Christ.” (154)

Before the law, did right and wrong exist?

After the law, does right and wrong still exist?

How is it still helpful for us to read the Old Testament laws if they do not apply to us?

- Types of old testament laws (not mutually exclusive categories)
 - apodictic (do or do not) (154)
 - casuistic (if, then) (156)
 - food laws (161)
 - laws about shedding of blood (161)
 - unusual prohibitions (162)
- Dos and don'ts (163-164)
 - Do see the Old Testament law as God's fully inspired word for you.
 - Don't see the Old Testament law as God's direct command to you.
 - Do see the Old Testament law as the basis for the Old Covenant, and therefore, for Israel's history.
 - Don't see the Old Testament law as binding on Christians in the New Covenant except where specifically renewed.
 - Do see God's justice, love, and high standards revealed in the Old Testament Law.
 - Don't forget to see that God's mercy is made equal to the severity of the standards.
 - Don't see the Old Testament law as complete. It is not technically comprehensive.
 - Do see the Old Testament law as a paradigm—providing examples for the full range of expected behavior.
 - Don't expect the Old Testament law to be cited frequently by the prophets or the New Testament.
 - Do remember that the essence of the law (Ten Commandments and the two chief laws) is repeated in the prophets and renewed in the New Testament.
 - Do see the Old Testament law as a generous gift to Israel, bringing much blessing when obeyed.
 - Don't see the Old Testament law as a grouping of arbitrary, annoying regulations limiting people's freedom.

If God is unchanging, why do the rules change???

B. THE PSALMS

“The problem with interpreting the Psalms arises primarily from their nature—what they are. Because the Bible is God’s Word, most Christians automatically assume that all it contains are words *from God to people*.” (187)

But what are the Psalms? (189-192)

- Psalms as musical poetry
- Address the mind—through the heart
- Contains poetic forms, such as parallelism
- Is very often purposefully metaphorical
- As literature, has different types and forms
- Has a function in the life of Israel
- Has patterns of words, letters, numbers
- Each is a single literary unit

What are some differences you have noticed between Psalms?

Types of Psalms (194)

- Laments (Individual 3, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 71, 120, 139, 142; Corporate 12, 44, 80, 94, 137)
- Thanksgiving Psalms (Individual 18, 30, 32, 34, 40, 66, 92, 116, 138; Corporate 65, 67, 75, 107, 124, 136)
- Hymns of Praise (Creator 8, 19, 104, 148; Protector 66, 100, 111, 114, 149; Lord 33, 103, 113, 117, 145)
- Salvation History Psalms (78, 105, 106, 135, 136)
- Psalms of Celebration and Affirmation
 - Covenant Renewal Liturgy (50, 81)
 - Royal Psalms (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 144)
 - Enthronement Psalms (24, 29, 47, 93, 95-99)
 - Songs of the City of Jerusalem (46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122)
- Wisdom Psalms (36, 37, 49, 112, 127, 128, 133)
- Songs of Trust (11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131)

When we read a Psalm, how might it be helpful to know what type of Psalm it is?

Psalm 3: A Lament (197)

Three Basic Benefits of the Psalms (204)

1. The Psalms are a *guide to worship*.
2. The Psalms demonstrate to us how we can relate *honestly* to God.
3. The Psalms demonstrate the importance of *reflection and meditation* upon things God has done for us.

ⁱ Fee, Gordon D., and Stuart, Douglas. “How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth,” 2nd Edition. Zondervan, 1993.