

G. Interpretation of Literature

a. _____ of Writing

1. Poetry

- a) Poetry is a form of literature where the deepest thoughts of the author's feelings and emotions may be beautifully expressed.
- b) Figures of speech, symbols, hyperboles, metaphors, similes and personification are all very familiar to poetry.
 1. **Hyperboles** – these are exaggerated statements used to portray a grand truth.
 1. Gen 22:17 – “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will **multiply thy seed as the stars** of the heaven, and as the **sand** which is upon the sea shore...”
 2. **Metaphors** - A comparison between two things that are unlike but made alike by affirming that one thing is the other which it resembles.
 1. Isa. 40:6 – “All flesh is grass...”
 2. Psalm 22:6 – “I am a worm”
 3. **Simile** - a comparison, likening one thing to another, using “like” or “as.”
 1. Isa. 53:6 – “All we like sheep have gone astray;”
 2. Matt. 13:24 – “The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man...”
 4. **Personification** - a thing, quality or idea is represented as though it were a person.
 1. Deut. 32:1 - :Give ear, O ye heavens; and hear O earth,”
 2. Prov. 8:1-2 – “Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.” (whole chapter personifies wisdom)
- c) About 33% of the Bible is written in Poet language.
- d) Several books of the Bible are dedicated poetic pieces: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. However you will find poetic writing right throughout the Scriptures.
 1. In **Job**, poetry is the language a suffering man's deepest agony. He suffered greatly, but didn't know why.
 2. In **Psalms**, it is the language of exalted prayer, great sorrow, and at times of fierce judgement, but in every case the psalmist seems to cry out, “O Lord, thou art my God, and I will praise thee.”
 3. In **Proverbs**, it is the language of true wisdom. One person said, “One Proverb a day keeps the flesh at bay.”

4. In **Ecclesiastes** it is the language expressing the futility of life apart from God. Any seeking of happiness apart from God ends in “vanity of vanity and vexation of spirit.”

5. In **Song of Solomon**, it is the language of love expressed so tenderly to portray the tender emotions felt between a bride and her groom.

2. Hebrew Poetry

- a) Hebrew poetry does not contain parallels of *rhythm* as in western style poetry, but parallels of *ideas*.
- b) There are two major kinds of parallels in Hebrew poetry:
Completive and Contrastive
- c) **Completive Parallelism:** the second part of the parallel completes or fulfills or explains or amplifies the first part. It agrees with the first and develops the idea.
 1. “Our God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1. The “very present help in time of trouble” reinforces and completes the first part that “God is our refuge and strength.”
 2. “Blessed is the man that **walketh not** in the **counsel of the ungodly**, nor **standeth** in the **way of sinners**, nor **sitteth** in the **seat of the scornful.**” Psalm 1:1. These three statements complete the requirements for being a “Blessed man.” Every word progresses building upon each other: walks (casual), stands (permanence, stance), and sits (intimate). There is also a progression from counsel, to way, to seat.
 3. Exodus 22:28 - “Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.”
 1. The expression “the gods” here is explained in the last part of the verse. It refers to rulers. Men are gods and lords in an earthly context only, referring to the divine image they bear from creation (Gen. 1:26, 27) and the royal authority they sometimes exercise under God. 1 Corinthians 8:5 also speaks of this. The Devil is called the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). There is only one true God, of course, but the Devil is called a god because he is served by men in this world.
- d) **Contrastive Parallelism:** the first line or thought is contrasted by the second.
 1. “**Weeping** may endure for a **night**; but **joy** cometh in the **morning.**” Psalm 30:5
 2. “A **soft answer** turneth away wrath: But **grievous words** stir up anger.” Proverbs 15:1
 3. Isaiah 45:7 says, “I form the **light**, and create **darkness**: I make **peace**, and create **evil**: I the Lord do all these things.”

1. The parallelism tells us the meaning of the verse. “I form the light, and create darkness” is the first half of the parallel. This clause contains a contrast between light and darkness. “I make peace, and create evil” is the second part of the parallel. This clause, too, contains a contrast— between peace and evil. Here evil means a lack of peace, referring to trouble of various sorts. The verse is not speaking of moral evil, but times of evil. God does not create sin, but He is in control of all times and seasons and circumstances.
2. Albert Barnes: “The parallelism here shows that this is not to be understood in the sense of all evil, but of that which is the opposite of peace and prosperity... The passage does not prove that God is the author of moral evil, or sin, and such a sentiment is abhorrent to the general strain of the Bible, and to all just views of the character of a holy God.”

e) Narrative

1. Narratives make up 43% of the Scriptures and are commonly known as the “stories of the Bible...” These narrations help Bible readers to remember the history, truths and principles of the Word of God.
2. Interpreting Bible narratives require a diligent attention to the main characters of the story and also the plot. It is important to notice the development of each character and the climax of each narrative.
 1. The account of David and Goliath.
 2. **Development of the character:** David was anointed by Samuel, he was a young shepherd boy, he was Saul’s amour bearer, and musician. He was despised of his brethren and he killed the lion and the bear.
 3. **Climax:** The battle and victory over Goliath wrought by the LORD.
 4. To interpret the victory over Goliath without considering the development of the character only has very little force.

f) Discourse

1. Discourses make up the remaining 24% of the Bible and include the speeches, letters and essays of the Scripture. These include the law, wisdom literature and the letters.

2. Discourses have the purpose of declaring plain truth in a very logical way. It doesn't use the methods of poetry or narrative to convey truth but rather just logical progression to draw a clear conclusion. It often is presented in a way progression as following: "If this is the case, and if this...then that will be the outcome"

1. Romans 8 – Exemplifies this.

- (1) V4-8 – The logical conclusions concerning them that are in the flesh.
- (2) V28-31 – If God has done all these things for us through His Son, how then shall He not freely give us all things?

Discourses bring the reader to clear conclusions of Biblical truth to believe and or obey.

b. _____

1. Definition:

- a) A type is an Old Testament prefiguring of some New Testament person or thing.
- b) The word "type" comes from the Greek word, *tupo*, meaning a figure, image left by a stamp, an example or mould.
- c) Types are prophetic symbols, and not just illustrations or parallels in Scripture.
- d) The type of the O.T. prefigures its antitype in the N.T.

2. Kinds of types: Taken mainly from "Protestant Biblical Interpretation," by Bernard Ramm.

- a) **Persons** - Adam and Melchisedec are types of Christ, Rom 5:14; Genesis 14:17-20; Heb. 7:1-17. Abraham prefigures all those who believe by faith. David is a type of Jesus Christ as Israel's King.
- b) **Sacrifices** – The whole sacrificial system, with the types of animals and characteristics of these animals, are types of Christ in His work of redemption, John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7.
- c) **Institutions** – The sacrifices are types of the cross. The institution of the Passover is a type of redemption.
- d) **Offices** – Moses, as a prophet, was a type of Christ as Prophet. Aaron, as high priest, was a type of Christ, our Great High Priest, Acts 3:22; Deut. 18:15-18; Heb. 8:1-6.
- e) **Events** – The wilderness wanderings were types for the believer's benefit, 1 Cor. 10:1-6, 11.
- f) **Actions** – The lifting up of the brazen serpent is a type of the lifting up of Christ on the cross, Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-16.
- g) **Things** – The Tabernacle was a type of the Incarnation, of God dwelling with His people, Hebrews 9:1-12, 22-28.

3. Interpretation of types

- a) Study the similarities and dissimilarities that exist between the type and antitype.
- b) Allow the context to determine how much of the type is significant to its antitype.
- c) Locate the New Testament authority for accepting an Old Testament figure as a type.
- d) Discern between true types and mere illustrations, e.g. colours, numbers, materials, shapes.
- e) Types were given to illustrate doctrine, not to prove doctrine.

c. _____

1. Definition

- a) A symbol is a literal object or thing which is used to represent something other than itself.

2. Direct Interpretation of Symbols

- a) There are many symbols in Scripture which are themselves interpreted directly by Scripture.
 1. The dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and the visions of Daniel are interpreted in the prophesy, Daniel 2,5,7,8 (Ch. 2 – Statues represent the coming kingdoms)
 2. Parable of the Sower, the Wheat and the Tares and others were interpreted by our Lord in His discourse with His disciples, Matt. 13.

3. Multiple Interpretation of Symbols

- a) Some things and persons may be represented by several symbols.
 1. Oil, wind and water sometimes represent the Holy Spirit – 1 John 2:20,27; Lev. 10:7; John 3:8; 7:38,39
 2. Water, mirror, sword at time represent the Word of God – Eph. 5:26; James 1:23; Rev. 19:15; Heb. 4:12.
 3. Lamb, lion, bread, vine, door may represent the Lord Jesus Christ, John 1:29; Rev. 5:5; John 6:48; 10:9; 15:1.
- b) Some symbols may represent several things or persons.
 1. Lamb is a symbol of Jesus Christ, the believer and the sinner, John 1:29; John 10:27; Isa. 53:6.
 2. Lion refers to Jesus Christ and the devil, Rev. 5:5; 1 Peter 5:8.
 3. Water is used for the Word of God, the Holy Spirit and regeneration, Eph. 5:26; John 7:38,39; Titus 3:5.

4. Guidelines for Interpreting Symbols

- a) Recognize the literal meaning of the symbol.
- b) Have a clear understanding of the normal characteristics of the symbol.
- c) Look for points of similarity that the symbol has with what it is representing.

- d) Seek to interpret the significance of the symbol.
- e) Seek to discover **the principle meaning** without too much emphasis on detail.

d. _____

It has been estimated that about 25-30% of the Bible and 90% of the Book of Revelation contain prophetic literature.

1. The Prophetic perspective:

- a) All prophesy has the future of Israel, its promised Messiah and its full restoration in Messiah's kingdom as its main perspective. The church comes into view with its association with Israel's Messiah. Beside his own day, the prophet's perspective centered around seven major events.

The prophet's own day - concerning issues that pertain to the prophet's current time, 2 Sam. 12:1-14; Isa. 38:1-22; Jer. 42:1-22.

1. Captivities of Israel and Judah

- 1. North Israel was told of its captivity in Assyria with no mention as to the duration of the captivity, but with a promise of a future deliverance, Hosea 11:5; 14:1-9.
- 2. Southern kingdom of Judah was told of its captivity in Babylon which would last for 70 years, after which a remnant will return to the land, Jer. 25:8-11; 29:10-14.

2. Restoration of Israel and Judah

- 1. As one nation, a united kingdom, Ezekiel 37:15-20
- 2. Under one king, Messiah, Isa. 11:1-5; Ezekiel 37:22-25.
- 3. In their land, Ezekiel 37:21-28.
- 4. As God's people, Isa. 10:20-23; Dan. 9:24; Ezekiel 36:21-38

3. First coming of Christ

- 1. His birth, Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14.
- 2. His life, Isa. 61:1,2a
- 3. His suffering and death, Isa. 52:13 – 53:1-2; Psalm 22
- 4. His resurrection, Psalm 16:9,10; Acts 2:25-36; 13:34,35

4. Dispersion of Israel into the world, Deut. 28:63-68; Psalm 106:27; Amos 9:9.

5. Second coming of Christ

1. The coming of Christ in the clouds; the rapture of the church, 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51,52.
2. The Tribulation on earth, Jer. 30:7-9; Dan. 9:27; 12:1; Joel 2:28-30; Zeph. 1:14-18; Matt. 24:3-28; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 4-19.
3. The coming of Christ upon the earth, Zech. 14:3-5; Matt. 24:29-31; 2 Thess. 1:7-12; Rev. 19:11-21.

6. Christ's kingdom

1. Satan will be bound, Rev. 20:1-3.
2. The duration will be for 1,000 years, Rev. 20:2.
3. Christ will reign as King, Isa. 11:1-5.
4. The church saints will reign with Christ, 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6.
5. There will be peace in the animal kingdom, Isa. 11:6-9.
6. Characterized by longevity, Isa. 65:20-22.
7. The nation of Israel will be restored, Dan. 9:24; Ezekiel 36:26-38.

7. **The New Heaven and New Earth**, Psalm 102:25,26; Isa. 65:17; Heb. 1:10,11; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Rev. 21,22.

2. Times of fulfillment

- a) In the immediate time of the prophet – Exodus 14:4, 13-18; 2 Kings 19:32-37; Jer. 38:17-23; Daniel 4:24-27; 5:25-29.
- b) In Old Testament times – Deut. 28:15-19; 1 Kings 13:1-3; 2 Kings 23:15,16; Nahum 1-3.
- c) In New Testament times – Isa. 7:14; Micah 5:2; Isa. 53; Daniel 9:26.
- d) Prophecies yet to be fulfilled – Isa. 61:2b,3; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Daniel 2:34,35; 9:27; Rev. 4-22.

3. Near and far fulfillment

- a) Called the Law of Double reference, some prophecies allude to a historical fulfillment, but find their complete and greater fulfillment in the future.
- b) God's promise to build David an house by setting up his seed after him and establishing his kingdom forever. Historically, David's seed was Solomon, but complete fulfillment came through David's greater seed, Jesus Christ, 2 Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Kings 8:17-21; Matt. 21:9.
- c) Isaiah 9:6-7 includes both the first and second coming of Christ. It has had its partial fulfillment already.
- d) Isaiah 61:1-3 – Jesus affirmed the prophetic law of double reference when he quoted half the prophesy and said "...This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Luke 4:21

4. Historical context of the prophets
 - a) Pre – exilic prophets
 1. Major prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah
 2. Minor prophets, Hosea to Zephaniah
 - b) Exilic prophets – Daniel and Ezekiel
 - c) Post – exilic prophets – Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
5. Principles for interpretation of prophesy
 - a) Study the historical background and time of the prophet.
 - b) Discern where the prophesy fits in the prophetic perspective.
 - c) Interpret according to the context and allow the prophet to give his own interpretation. E.g. Daniel 2, 7, 8
 - d) Consider the use of all figurative and symbolic language.
 - e) Consider the New Testament’s treatment of prophesy .e.g. Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:22, 23
 - f) Check whether the prophecy was completely fulfilled, or only partially fulfilled, e.g. Joel 2:28-32 cf. Acts 2:16-21.
 - g) Avoid being over confident in the interpretation of every detail of unfulfilled prophesies.

Homework:

- Review quizzes and study notes for exam.
- Bring to class next week: Bible Commentaries, Concordance, Bible dictionaries, Bible Encyclopaedias, or your laptop/iPad with E-sword Bible program.
- Reading and Quotations: Bible Explorers Guide, J. Phillips – Part 1 – Ch. 21 – 22
- Interpretation assignment: What are the “seven heads and ten horns” of Revelation 17:3?