

BGM BIBLE COLLEGE

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

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LECTURE 2

The First Subject: The Benefits of Studying the Holy Bible

This day we consider two or three matters, of which the first is this: *What is the benefit of studying the Bible?* What is the importance and profit of searching the Scriptures? For though ye learn the principles of interpretation, yet if both the preacher and the hearer know not the value of the Bible itself, the learning of principles shall profit little. Unless a man know the worth of that Book which he interpreted, his interpretation shall lack power.

The Five Philosophical Questions Answered by the Scriptures

The first great blessing of the Bible is this: **The Holy Scriptures answer the five greatest philosophical questions of mankind.** These are questions upon which the world hath spent billions in research, yet the atheists—those who deny the existence of God—still wander in confusion. But the believer hath the Scriptures, though many read them not.

1. The Question of Origin – “Whence Came Man?”

The first philosophical question is this: *Where did man come from?* This is called **the question of origin.** The world hath written books and laboured in vain; yet the Bible answered plainly in **Genesis 2:7** that the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Man’s origin is not in beasts nor in blind processes, but in the creative act of God. Though some cling to the theories of evolution, the Scripture declared that man was made in the image of God.

2. The Question of Meaning – “What Is Man?”

The second question is this: *Who is man? What is the meaning of his existence?* This is called **the question of meaning.** In **Genesis 1**, the Scripture saith that God made man in His own image and likeness. The Latin term is *Imago Dei*—the image of God. Thus man is not a mere machine or creature of instinct, but a being reflecting the likeness of his Creator.

3. The Question of Purpose – “Why Doth Man Exist?”

The third question is this: *Why doth man exist?* This is called **the question of purpose.** The Bible alone gives a satisfactory answer: in **Isaiah 43:7** it is written that God created man for His glory. The chief purpose of thy life is not thy labour, nor thy ministry, but to show forth

the glory of God. Likewise, [1 Corinthians 11:7](#) declared that man is the image and glory of God.

4. The Question of Relationship – “What Is Man’s Relation to Creation?”

The fourth question is this: *What is man’s relationship to the rest of creation?* This is called **the question of relationship**. The Scriptures teach in [Genesis 1](#) that the same God who created man also created every living thing. Thus we share a common Creator, and the believer must understand his relation both to God (vertical) and to mankind and creation (horizontal).

5. The Question of Destiny – “Whither Goeth Man?”

The fifth and final question is this: *What is the destiny of man? Where is he going?* This is called **the question of destiny**. The world knoweth not the answer. When asked concerning life after death, the unbeliever remained silent and uncertain. Yet the Bible declared clearly in [Matthew 25:46](#) that there are two destinies: everlasting punishment and everlasting life. The future of every soul shall be decided according to his relation to Christ.

The Preacher’s Duty: Interpret the Word, Not Mere Impressions

Since the Bible answered all these questions, the servant of God must not preach messages based on impressions. An impressionistic sermon is one where a man readeth a verse and speaketh only what he felt. But God hath not set His servant to preach his own impressions. The preacher must give **an interpretive message**, declaring what God hath spoken, not what he himself feeleth. Many read a verse and preach their own thoughts; but the preacher of God must declare only the Word of God.

Conclusion

Thus the first blessing of studying the Bible is this: *it answered that which the world hath never been able to answer.* Therefore, when ye become interpreters and preachers of the Word—as I pray earnestly ye shall—your message must bring to the hearers the answers which no other book or philosophy can give. As I often say: *If thou come out of the world, Christ shall receive thee; but if thou depart from Christ, whither wilt thou go?*

The Second Blessing of the Holy Scriptures

The Practical Value of the Bible for the Believer

Beloved, the second blessing concerning the Holy Bible—its reading and its study—is this: that the Scriptures hold *practical application* for every believer. What place doth the Bible hold in the life of a Christian? What value doth it bear in daily practice? This I shall now declare, and with scriptural references.

Why the Servants of God Preach on the Lord’s Day

Ye know well why the pastors of the churches proclaim their message every Lord’s Day. Oftentimes I myself journey far upon the Sabbath. Last Lord’s Day I went unto Pattoki; the

next I ministered in Lalamusa. And why do I travel such distances? Why do the pastors preach? Why is there a message every Sunday?

The brethren have said well that Sunday is a day of rest, and the Word is proclaimed on that day. This is true. Yet how doth the message reach the people? Through preaching. And therefore, I desire that ye write down a certain name and, if ye find opportunity, study his life.

Charles Simeon: An Example for Preachers

Many speak of Charles Spurgeon and call him *the Prince of Preachers*. Yet there is another man whose name many scholars overlook, though they ought not to do so: the man **Charles Simeon**. Mark his name well. He was a mighty preacher, and he taught by expository preaching. He hath a saying concerning the ministry of the Word, and he gave three purposes of preaching.

The Three Purposes of Gospel Preaching (Charles Simeon)

1. That Sinners May Come unto Christ

The first purpose of preaching is this: that sinners may come unto Christ. When ye prepare your message, bear this in mind—that through your preaching those who have not yet come unto the Saviour may be drawn unto Him.

2. That the Saviour Alone Be Glorified

The second purpose is this: that the Redeemer may be glorified. Your preaching must not glorify *you*. Many preachers spend half an hour speaking of themselves, while the congregation waited to hear the name of Jesus. Preach not yourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. Your message must glorify the Saviour, not the preacher.

3. That Believers May Grow in Spiritual Maturity

The third purpose is this: that those who already believe may grow in spiritual maturity. When ye teach the Scriptures, do not imagine that because ye have studied hermeneutics ye are superior to others. Knowledge must produce humility, not pride. The purpose of teaching is the strengthening of the saints.

The First Practical Benefit: Spiritual Nourishment

The first practical benefit of studying the Scriptures is this: **the believer received spiritual nourishment** through the Word. For it is written:

“As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word,
that ye may grow thereby.”
— *1 Peter 2:2*

Even as the body growth weak without physical food, so the spirit growth weary without the Word of God. As Dr. Liaqat Qaiser once said: *Even as a fish cannot survive without water, so a believer cannot survive without the Word of God.*

Yet many—even ministers—become so busy that they neglect the reading of Scripture. We are the people of the Book, and yet we often read not the Book by which we are named.

Thus the first benefit is spiritual nourishment—growth, strengthening, and edification.

The Second Practical Benefit: Divine Guidance

The second benefit is **guidance**. The believer received direction for his life from the Scriptures. For it is written:

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.”

— *Psalm 119:105*

The Word of God showed the believer where to place his steps.

The Third Practical Benefit: A Weapon for Spiritual Warfare

The third benefit is this: **the Scriptures are the believer’s weapon in spiritual warfare**. It is written:

“And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”
— *Ephesians 6:17*

In the hour of temptation and conflict, the Word of God is thy defence and thy strength.

The Fourth Practical Benefit: Understanding the Will of God

The fourth and final benefit is this: **the Scriptures enable the believer to know and to do the will of God**. Many young people, even those well-educated, oft say, “We know not what the will of God is for our lives.” But a wise man hath said:

“**The Word of God is the Will of God.**”

If thou read not the Scriptures, how shalt thou know the will of the Lord? Thy personal name may not be written therein, yet the Word revealed a divine pattern, a path that leaded thee into the will of God.

For it is written:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God...
That the man of God may be perfect,
thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”
— *2 Timothy 3:16–17*

LEARNING THE ART OF EXPOSITION

Understanding the Benefits and Blessings of the Word

Teach you to expound the Scriptures. Learn also what the benefits of the Word are, and what blessings proceed therefrom. Now shall we advance further and speak of this matter: that indeed the Word hath benefits, and it hath blessings; and these are not matters unknown unto you. Yet the question remained: *Why is it that many read not the Holy Bible?* What is the reason?

And when I made research upon this matter, I discovered a research within my own research; and therein were eight reasons—eight causes—why people read not the Bible. Today I desire to share those eight reasons with you.

When ye shall expound the Scriptures, and when ye shall learn the rules of interpretation, ye must not only learn how to expound the Word; but ye must also understand this: that the people unto whom ye go to preach—*why is it that they do not read the Bible?* Why have they no attachment to the Word? Why have they no inclination toward it? These matters are very needful to know.

Eight Reasons Why People Do Not Read the Bible

According to the research I found, there were eight reasons. And I lay them now before you.

1. They Say the Bible Hath No Relevance to Their Life

Many read not the Scriptures because they say, “The Bible agreed not with my life. It is not relevant unto me. I am a university student. I am a child of a new age. I have new thoughts. What shall this old book teach me? These are ancient stories written centuries ago. They contain nothing that pertained unto my present troubles. The matters I pass through—where doth the Bible give me any solution?”

2. They Say They Are Confused, for the Bible Is Difficult to Understand

Secondly, many say, “When we read the Bible, we become confused; and to understand it is very hard.”

Speak with the youth of this generation, and ye shall find this common saying: “We read not the Old Testament, for its words are difficult; we comprehend them not. The vocabulary is hard; the history is hard.” Thus they are confused, and the Word seemed to them difficult.

3. They Say the Bible No Longer Affected Their Life

Thirdly, some say, “At the beginning, when I read the Bible, it pleased me. But gradually I perceived that it effected no change in my life; therefore I ceased reading.”

And unto such the Lord saith, “*Thou hast left thy first love.*”

4. They Feel Shame and Guilt When They Read the Word

The fourth reason is most striking: many read not the Scriptures because when they read, they feel shame and guilt. The Bible declared the sins which they commit. The Bible saith, “Lie not,” yet they lie. The Bible saith, “Walk in purity,” yet they behold unclean things upon their devices. Therefore they feel the weight of guilt.

For if the Bible be as dew, it is also a flame. If it be as rain, it is also a hammer. The Word worked within a man's life.

5. They Rely Upon Pastors and Teachers Instead of Reading for Themselves

The fifth reason—most common in our land—is this: many say, “It is the duty of the pastors to read the Bible. I go on Sunday; the pastor preached; I hear the Word. Why then should I read it myself?” They rely upon pastors and Bible teachers. They say, “We learn in the class. We hear the sermon on Sunday. Why keep the Bible open all the time?” Thus they read not the Scriptures.

6. They Claim They Have No Time

The sixth reason is this: “We have no time. We are busy.” Busy to eat, busy to attend weddings, busy to prepare, busy to sleep—but not busy to read the Word of God. They say, “We are so busy that we have no time to read the Bible.”

7. The Young Say the Bible Is Boring

The seventh reason is greatly increasing among the younger generations. In an international meeting, we observed that many youths say, “The Bible is boring. I desire not to read it.”

Children will take great interest in games on their phones, but not in the Holy Scriptures. To be honest, the culture of preaching hath greatly increased in Pakistan, but the culture of *reading* the Bible hath not increased accordingly. Yet blessed be God for those who do read it.

8. Many Do Not Own a Bible

The eighth reason—and sadly very common in our country—is this: many say, “I have no Bible of mine own. I read not because I possess not a Bible.” They wait for some ministry to give them a free Bible. They say, “When such-and-such pastor cometh with free Bibles, then I shall read. But until one is given freely, I shall not purchase my own.”

Thus many read not the Bible because they possess it not.

These, then, are the eight reasons why people read not the Word of God.

The Responsibility of the Expositor

Ye are called to expound the Scriptures. Ye must declare the meaning of the Word. From whence shall ye preach? From the Bible. Therefore first gain knowledge of the blessings of reading the Bible; and then also gain understanding of why people read it not.

Introduction to the Six-Phase Bible Story

Now there remained yet one more topic, which we shall strive to cover: **the Six-Phase Bible Story.**

Are ye weary?

In one place while the message was being preached, an elder slept soundly. When they awakened him and asked why he slept, he said, "The Lord gives unto His beloved sleep." But the preacher said unto him, "I know not whether thou art His beloved or not—but in my class ye must remain awake. I cannot give you anything in sleep; only God can give that."

Hear now: the concept I am about to teach is, according to my small measure of knowledge, essential for the study of exegesis. Without it, I think not that one can rightly grasp the science of interpretation. It is called **the Six-Phase Bible Story**—the story of the Bible in six stages.

Some teach it in three stages, some in four; but the book from which I studied opened it most clearly in six.

A Visual Representation

Now I must draw a small diagram for you that it may be easy for you to understand. My drawing is not good—BGMC even taught drawing well—but here I attempt it nonetheless.

Engaging the Preachers

How many among you are pastors, preaching every Sunday? Who among you ministered the Word? Raise your hands.

Let us engage a little.

One among you, please stand. When thou prepares to preach, or when an invitation cometh saying, "Sister, thou must preach tomorrow," how dost thou choose thy message? How dost thou decide whether thou shalt preach from the Gospels, or from the Epistles? Tell us briefly.

She answered: "I pray. I fast. When God gives me the passage, then I search other verses, compare Scripture with Scripture, and prepare according as we were taught."

Excellent. Thank you.

And now from the other side—brother, please stand...

PREPARING THE WORD OF GOD

Considering the Mind-set in Preparation

How dost thou prepare thy heart when thou makes ready a message from the Word? What thoughts arise within thy mind when thou prepares a sermon from the Holy Scriptures? Oftentimes it cometh to pass that when someone invited thee to preach, he himself appointed the topic; and thus thou must needs examine that theme. But at other times, when thou prepares a message of thine own choosing, thou considers the nature of the passage, its proportion, its direction, and the destination toward which the Scripture leadeth. And according to that divine purpose thou walks.

Seeing Our Place in the Story of Scripture

When thou prepares a sermon, or when thou prepares an expository message, hast thou ever pondered where *we* stand in the great story of the Bible? Hearken carefully: In the whole story of the Bible there is creation, then the fall, and then all that followed. Let me quickly write before thee the order of these things.

First, what is the first stage in the story of Scripture? God created.

Second, what befell thereafter? Man fell into sin.

Third, after man fell into sin, what did God then do? We shall fast-forward: God took a man—yea, one man—Abraham, even before he was called Abraham, and drew him forth from the land of Ur. And from that one man God raised up a nation. What is its name? Israel. God chose Israel that they might manifest Him unto the nations; that they might be His representatives, His ambassadors.

Israel's Failure and the Coming of Christ

What then befell after Israel? Even this: Israel failed in that for which God had chosen them. God had given them the Ten Commandments, yet they failed to keep them. Therefore God sent His Son. Herein the Gospels begin. Jesus Christ came; the Word was made flesh. And when His death, burial, and resurrection were accomplished, He ascended. And before ascending He entrusted a commission unto His disciples, who are called apostles, saying, *Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations.* Thus we behold the age of the Early Church.

And after the age of the Early Church, before the End Times come, there is a season. This season is the age of the Church. And herein stand you and me. The End has not yet come; therefore it shall surely come. Thus we dwell between the beginning of the Church and the consummation of all things.

God's Unfolding Plan in History

All these things were in the counsel of God. The Seed of the woman was promised; and the pattern of that promise beginneth to appear in Israel. When we behold Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3, God saith unto him three things: *I will give thee a land; I will make of thee a nation; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* Scholars speak of this as Abraham's Seed—a seed that shall be a blessing unto the nations. God had foreordained this, yet to bring His plan to pass, He wrought through a divine process.

There is a writing by a certain John Stott, though the name of the book escaped me. He saith: The failure to keep the Ten Commandments was a sign that man, in his own strength, could not please God. The inability to walk perfectly in the Law revealed man's weakness and God's holiness. Thus the sacrificial system was introduced, as recorded in Leviticus, because the people kept not the commandments given unto them.

The Six Phases of the Biblical Story (Meta-Narrative)

These are the six phases of the story of the Bible. If thou must needs declare the whole Bible unto someone in one or two minutes, declare unto them these six points; for these six encompass the whole. Scholars call this the *Meta-Narrative of Scripture*—the Great Story of the Bible. Not a fable, but the record of God's mighty acts.

These six are:

1. Creation
2. Fall
3. Israel
4. Jesus Christ
5. The Early Church
6. The End Times

These are simple, and ye have studied them before, yet I count it my spiritual duty to lead you through them, for they bear great weight when ye interpret Scripture.

Why These Six Phases Matter for Interpreting Scripture

Why then do we study these six phases in a class on Hermeneutics? Because on the Lord's Day ye do not preach the entire Bible. Ye preach from one place or another: perhaps from Genesis, or from the Pentateuch, or from the Gospels, or from the Epistles. Yet wherever ye take your text, ye must know where in the great story of Scripture your chosen passage falleth.

If thou takes a passage from the Prophets, thou shoulders know where it standout. If thou takes a passage from Judges, where doth Judges fit among these six stages? Judges belonged to the period of Israel. Consider Judges Chapter 6. Whose story is found there? Gideon. If thou takes thy sermon from Judges, thou must know that the time was when *every man did that which was right in his own eyes*.

Context Before and After the Passage

When thou preaches an expository sermon, if thou knows these six stages, thou understands what God wrought before thy passage and what He wrought after it. Thus thou shalt avoid the error many pastors fall into: they take a verse from Judges, yet know not what happened before it, nor what happened after it, nor where it standeth in the history of redemption. They leap from Judges straight unto the Church, as though the passage spake directly and immediately of us.

But thou art not in the age of Judges; nor art thou in the days of Israel's kingdom; nor art thou in the time of the Gospels. Thou stands here—in the age of the Church, after the Early Church, yet before the End Times. When thou knows where the text standeth, and where *thou* stands, then thy application shall be powerful, fitting, and faithful.

The Importance of Seeing the Whole Story

Therefore, when ye choose a text, ye must know what God hath done before that text, and what God hath done after it; for the Church of today dwelled here, not there. When this understanding is laid hold of, the application of Scripture becomes easier, more meaningful, and more effective. Thus shall your preaching be sound and rich in understanding.