

# BGM BIBLE COLLEGE

## BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

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### LECTURE 3

#### Introduction and Review

##### The Nature of Holy Scripture

It was compiled over fourteen hundred years; and forty writers were used of God, being moved by the Holy Ghost, to set forth these sacred writings. And it hath three sections: *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, and *Ketuvim* in the Hebrew tongue—known in Urdu as *Shari 'at ki Kitab*, *Anbiya ke Sahā'if*, and *Kutub*.

##### The Five Philosophical Questions Answered by Scripture

We also beheld the five questions which mankind seeketh after, and the Bible answered them gloriously:

1. **From whence came man?**
2. **Who is man?**
3. **What is man's relation to the world around him?**
4. **Why doth man exist?**
5. **Whither goeth man?**

These are the questions which philosophers wrestled with for ages, yet we are blessed, for we are believers in the Bible; we are the people of God and of His Spirit. The Bible answered these questions comprehensively and beautifully.

##### The Value of Scripture for the Believer

Furthermore, we spake of the worth the Holy Scripture holdeth for the believer. And ye answered well:

- The Bible is a **spiritual weapon**.
- It is **necessary for spiritual nourishment**.
- It gives **guidance**, for God speaketh unto us by it.
- It **leaded us in decision-making**, for life is naught but a series of decisions.

Yea, one said rightly: *Go not unto the church that is near thy house; go unto the church that is near the Bible*. For many go unto that which is near their home, yet that place is far from the Book. But ye must go unto the place that is near the Holy Scripture and founded upon the inspired doctrines of God.

## Why Many Read Not the Bible

We also considered research regarding why many read not the Scriptures; yet today time permitted not a full review. But I do always rehearse former lessons, for when a student entereth the class, he bringeth clouds upon his mind—clouds of troubles, burdens, concerns of home, matters of employment. But the light of God's Word must pierce through those clouds. For the mind is a most powerful tool given of God, whereby thou shalt love the Lord not only with thy heart and strength, but also **with thy mind**.

For Jesus spake unto the woman of Samaria, saying, “*Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship.*”

## The Meta-Narrative of the Bible

Last time we spake of **six phases**—the great Story of the Bible, the *Meta-Narrative*. Though diagrams we drew then, yet today we proceed without them. And though some faces are new, yet for their sake let us begin again from the first phase.

### Phase 1 — Creation

The Bible beginneth with Creation. God by the Word of His mouth brought all things into being. The Hebrew word **Bārā** signified *creating out of nothing*—not that God took some matter and shaped it, but that He brought forth all things **out of nothing**. He made man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, giving him stewardship and authority.

### Phase 2 — the fall of Man

After Creation came the fall. Man fell into sin. The issue was not the fruit itself, but disobedience. Genesis chapter 3 setteth forth this whole account. And God declared that enmity would be placed between the serpent and the seed of the woman—a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who crushed death, the grave, and the adversary.

### Phase 3 — Israel

After the fall we behold the history of Israel. What is the Old Testament? It is history, poetry, wisdom literature, law, prophecy. In it we see God calling Abraham out of Ur, and making covenant with him, as written in Genesis 12:1–3. This covenant is known in theology as the **Abrahamic Covenant**—in Hebrew, *Berith*; in Urdu, ‘*Ahd*; in English, *Covenant*.

### The History of Israel Continued

#### Bondage in Egypt and the Rise of Moses

And what followed thereafter? Israel goeth down into the bondage of Egypt. And the LORD raised up Moses, and He set him forth as a deliverer unto His people; and by his hand God brought them forth out of that slavery. And when Moses died, the LORD raised up Joshua the son of Nun, and thus the story proceeded further.

#### The Division of the Kingdom

It came to pass after the death of King Solomon, that the kingdom of Israel was divided into two realms: the Northern and the Southern. The Southern Kingdom was called **the Kingdom of Judah**; and the Northern Kingdom was called **Israel**. But what befell them? The Southern Kingdom, because of sin, because of departing from God, and because of idolatry, went into exile. Yea, they were carried away captive. The Northern Kingdom was taken by the Assyrians—yea, the King of Assyria came upon them in the eighth century before Christ, some eight hundred years before His appearing.

And the Southern Kingdom was carried away by Babylon, about one hundred and fifty years later; and their captivity lasted seventy years. These things must ye know; yea, ye must learn these matters well.

The Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrians; the Southern Kingdom, even Judah, fell to the Babylonians.

### **The Close of the Old Testament and the Dawn of the New**

And after these things, when Israel had gone into captivity, and the prophets had spoken the word of the LORD, the Old Testament closet with Malachi. And then beginneth the Gospel written by Matthew the Apostle, thus opening the New Testament, or the New Covenant.

When the LORD Jesus Christ came, even when He was born, the Jews counted themselves still in bondage; yet it was no longer the bondage of Assyria, nor of Babylon, but the bondage of Rome. Even now is the Christmas season, and ye prepare your programs; the ministers shall come and tell you that in the days when Christ was born, the nation of the Jews was under the Roman Empire—a pagan empire indeed. And what meant “pagan”? It meant *idol-worshipping*.

Even in the first century A.D. the Jews still felt themselves exiled; though Assyria was gone and Babylon fallen, yet Rome sat upon them. They had religious liberty to a degree, yet political liberty they had not; for the Roman Empire held the sceptre.

### **God’s Faithfulness in Every Era**

In this era, wherein Christ was born, we learn that God’s presence abided in every season. In Creation God was present; in the Fall God was present, giving promise of deliverance. When Israel went into Assyrian captivity, God raised prophets—promising, foretelling, and declaring that His covenant remained with them.

Look into the book of Micah, behold Haggai, consider Habakkuk, and study Daniel: all declare that though ye go into captivity for your sins, *yet ye shall return; God Himself shall bring you back.*

All these pointers—so we name them in academic language—point toward Christ. The prophecy that the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head pointed to Christ. The prophecy of the King entering Jerusalem upon the colt of an ass pointed to Christ. The prophecy of the virgin conceiving and bringing forth a Son pointed to Christ. Thus **all the prophecies of the Old Testament point toward Jesus.**

### **The Incarnation of Christ**

And after these prophecies, **Christ Himself came**, the Word made flesh. Though the people were yet in a kind of bondage, yet the coming of Christ declared that God had not forsaken them. Whether in Assyria or Babylon or under Rome, the LORD who had been with them foretime now pitched His tabernacle among them in the Person of Jesus Christ.

### **The Death, Ascension, and Commission of Christ**

After the death of the LORD Jesus Christ, and after He rose again, He ascended on high. And while they stood gazing, the angels said, *“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus... shall so come in like manner.”* But before His glorious second coming, He gave a responsibility—a commission—from which the early Church sprang forth.

And what responsibility was that? That the Church should **preach the Gospel**. Now it is for you to consider whether the Church today fulfilled that task. I am not to answer this; ye must answer—whether ye be pastor, layman, or head of a family.

### **Authority Given Through the Holy Ghost**

The LORD gave responsibility, but if responsibility be given without authority, the task cannot be fulfilled. If I hire thee in my company but give thee no authority, who shall heed thee? Therefore Christ not only gave responsibility, but also bestowed authority and power. And for this cause, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost descended.

For without the Holy Ghost neither the Christian life can be lived, nor the Christian ministry wrought. If ye say that ye shall labour by your own strength, or knowledge, or degrees—ye deceive yourselves. Without the Holy Ghost we can do nothing. Neither the apostles without the Spirit could accomplish aught, nor can we.

### **The Coming of Power at Pentecost**

And thus it was: the commission had been given unto them, and the Great Commission had been entrusted unto their charge; yet for its fulfilment the strength and might were needed, which strength was bestowed on the Day of Pentecost by the descent of the Holy Ghost. And God Himself had said, *“Tarry ye, until ye be endued with power from on high.”* For the word *power* in the Greek tongue is **dunamis**, from which cometh the English word **dynamite**.

### **The Rise of the Apostles**

And what followed thereafter? God raised up the apostles; and the apostles stood forth. They wrote epistles; they planted churches. How many missionary journeys did Paul the Apostle make? Yea, four were purposed, yet the fourth came not to pass, for he was slain. And which was the last epistle after which he suffered martyrdom? Which one? Nay, there is another also—ye say the second epistle. Yea, **Second Timothy** was the epistle he wrote, after which he was slain; and in that epistle he saith, *“I have fought a good fight.”*

### **The Era of the Early Church**

And after this, when we behold the apostles and the era of the early Church passing by, what era cometh? The **Church Age**, which theologians speak of? This, my brethren and sisters, is

the era wherein ye **live**. And the purpose for which I rehearsed all this history before you was this: that when ye preach the Word—as I told you last time—whether ye be Sunday School teachers, whether ye teach the children, whether ye be pastors who preach every Lord’s Day in your churches—when ye cite a reference, ye must know from whence that reference cometh.

### **Knowing the Biblical Storyline**

If ye take a reference from the prophets, yea, men shall speak on Isaiah 9, or on Isaiah 7:14, or on Isaiah 53, because the season requires it. But whatever reference ye take, ye must know where in the storyline of Scripture that reference standeth. If ye cite from the books of the prophets, from the roll of Isaiah, then how shall ye preach it? What exposition shall ye give? Ye must show the people what befell in the past, how we arrive at Isaiah, and how Isaiah the prophet leaded us unto Jesus. And when ye come to Jesus, ye then come unto this very era of the Church wherein ye dwell today; and thus may ye prepare a sound sermon.

But if ye take a reference and know not the storyline, nor what God doeth in that portion, then how shall ye preach the Word of God? Understand you? If ye cite from the chronicles or from the book of Joshua, know from whence it is taken and how ye shall preach upon it.

### **Misuse of Passages without Context**

Many say, “*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; thou shalt meditate therein day and night, and thou shalt have good success.*” And the ministers hastily say, “*Read your Bible daily; let the Word not depart from your mouth.*” But first, explain why God said this unto Joshua. Begin from there; then bring us unto this point. Ye have leapt over great portions.

This is the reason I am explaining the ages unto you; for I desire not merely to give you definitions of exegesis, nor merely to recite the twenty-two principles of interpretation and then declare the course finished. Nay, I desire that ye have a **firm foundation**, that ye understand hermeneutics aright, and that when ye choose a reference, ye choose with understanding.

### **Future Instruction in Preaching References**

In lectures to come, I shall tell you upon what occasions which references ought to be preached. Last time, when I taught eschatology, I told you that many, when they go to funerals, preach concerning the one whose soul hath departed—whether sister or brother—and they say, “*I have fought a good fight.*” And they apply Paul’s words unto the deceased, saying, “*This brother hath fought a good fight.*” How know ye whether he fought at all? And if he fought, how know yet whether it was a good fight? Paul spake concerning **himself**, yet ye apply it unto the dead—and do so continually.

If the man be righteous, and the Church beareth witness of his righteousness, and ye have seen the fruits of the Spirit in his life—then the saying may stand. But if one hath not fought aright, and ye say he hath fought a good fight, ye misapply the Scripture. Understand ye? Your silence testifies that ye understand. Students are silent for two reasons—either they understand all, or they understand nothing. I hope it is not the second.

There are many such references wrongly preached throughout Pakistan; these I shall show you in due season with examples.

### **The End-Time, the Final Age**

And after the Church Age, what age cometh? The **End Time**, concerning which I have a complete course; I shall not expound it here. Go unto YouTube; on the BGM Bible College channel there are about **141 lectures**. There ye may learn concerning eschatology.

But this I shall say: betwixt the apostolic age, the ecclesiastical age, and the final age, lieth the Church Age—and **ye are living therein**. Therefore, when ye preach the Word, look first into the Bible and discern from which age ye speak, unto which age ye point, and for which age ye prepare the people.

Many churches, I know, pass six months without a single sermon on the Second Coming of Christ. Many church members tell me, “*Sir, in our church nothing is spoken concerning the Second Coming.*” And I say unto myself, in the very era wherein ye live, at least once in two or four months, something should be spoken concerning how the Second Coming of Jesus Christ shall be, when it shall be, in what manner it shall come to pass, what signs shall precede it, and what things shall occur before it. Follow you the thought? Good.

### **A New Subject: The Formation of the Bible**

Today we shall behold a new subject under Biblical Hermeneutics—**the Formation of the Bible**, how the Holy Scriptures were shaped, how they were given a written form. For even in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Old Testament was already held as the Word of God. And the words of Jesus Christ and the deeds of Jesus Christ were also recorded, which writings we call **the Gospels**.

If any ask you, “*What are the Gospels?*” tell them: *The record of the Person of Christ, the words of Christ, and the works of Christ.* The identity of Christ, the words of Christ, and the works of Christ—**this is the Gospels** in their recorded form.

The evangelical definition of the Gospel is this: that Jesus Christ came into the world, and died, and was buried, and rose again the third day; and whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. This is the Gospel in its evangelistic definition.

The historical definition is this: that historically, the Gospels are the record of the Person, the sayings, and the works of Jesus Christ—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the four Gospels, revolve around these very matters.

### **The Writing Materials of Scripture**

And likewise we see that when the stories of the Holy Bible, or the Word of God as it was revealed, were given, the prophets recorded them. In ancient artifacts we see that they were written upon stones; and many things were written upon the skins of animals. And afterward, when men advanced somewhat in skill, in Egypt by the river Nile there grew a plant called **papyrus**; and when the papyrus was wetted and beaten as dough, a form of paper was made, and many of the words of Scripture were written upon papyrus.

Be thankful unto the Pakistan Bible Society, who have provided you the Bible in a beautiful and convenient manner. In olden times men had no such Scriptures as ye possess; they had scrolls, the skins of animals, and inscriptions upon stones. The Law indeed was written upon the mountains, yet thanks be unto God it is hidden from none.

### **The Languages of the Old Testament**

The Old Testament was written mainly in the **Hebrew** tongue. Yet some say, “*The Old Testament is Hebrew, the New Testament is Greek,*” and this is not entirely accurate; for though the New Testament is wholly in Greek, the Old Testament contained certain portions in **Aramaic**. Which portions? I shall tell you.

Mainly, the Old Testament is in Hebrew. But certain parts are in Aramaic; for example, **Genesis 31:47**. Read it: “*And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed.*” *Jegar-sahadutha*—this is an Aramaic word; *Galeed* is the Hebrew. One of the place-names there is Aramaic.

And another portion is **Jeremiah 10:11**.

### **The Aramaic Tongue in Holy Scripture**

It is written that certain portions of the Sacred Text were originally set forth in the Aramaic tongue. In the Book of Daniel the Prophet there are found about six chapters written in Aramaic. Ezra also, who was a priest before the LORD, hath portions of his book recorded in Aramaic. And not only in the Old Testament was the Aramaic speech acknowledged, but even in the New Testament certain words of Aramaic were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

### **Aramaic Utterances of the Lord Jesus Christ**

For example, in the Gospel according to Mark, chapter five and verse forty-one, when the Lord entered into the house to heal the young damsel, He said unto her, *Talitha cumi*, that is to say, *Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.* This word *Talitha cumi* is Aramaic. Again, when He healed another man, as it is written in Mark 7:34, He said unto him, *Ephphatha*, that is, *be opened.* This also is Aramaic. Furthermore, in Matthew 27, among the seven sayings from the Cross, there is that well-known cry: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* Which likewise is Aramaic, meaning, *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*

Thus it becomes evident that the Lord Jesus Christ spake chiefly in the Aramaic tongue; yet the things spoken of Him were written in Greek, for in those days the Greek language had become the common speech of the nations, the **lingua franca** understood of all.

### **The Formation of the Holy Bible**

When therefore the Holy Scriptures were formed, the books of the Old Testament were received, and afterward the Gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament were taken, and so the Bible was compiled. This matter pertained unto what is called **the Biblical Canon**.

### **Definition of the Biblical Canon**

*Biblical Canon*, in simple speech, is the **list or catalogue of those books which were included in the Holy Bible**. The word *canon* cometh from the Greek word meaning *law* or *rule*, and from the Hebrew word meaning *reed*, that is, a measuring rod; whereby anything might be tested and measured. This term was used concerning the Scriptures so that it might be clearly declared which books the scholars, teachers, and the Church throughout history have unanimously acknowledged to be the true and inspired Word of God.

Thus the **Old Testament Canon** is one matter, and the **New Testament Canon** another. By the Old Testament Canon is meant those books which were admitted into the former covenant; and by the New Testament Canon, those writings which formed the latter covenant. In the Protestant Bible, the Old Testament contained thirty-nine books, and the New Testament twenty-seven, making in all sixty-six. These together form the **Biblical Canon**.

The Canon is closed: sixty-six meant sixty-six, and not sixty-seven. No book may now be added thereto.

### **The Completion of the Canon**

The Canon of the Old Testament was established earlier; but the Canon of the New Testament required much time, labour, and spiritual discernment. Various councils met—such as the Council of Hippo, the Council of Carthage, and other assemblies of bishops. And though time would fail to recount their histories, for this discourse pertained to hermeneutics and not to Church history, yet it sufficed to say that the Holy Ghost guided the servants of God, that the Scriptures might be sealed and perfected in sixty-six books.

### **Why Some Books Were Rejected**

This bringeth forth the question: By what standard did the elders and teachers judge which books were to be included? Why were the *Prayer of Manasseh*, the *Gospel of Barnabas*, and other writings not counted? Why were historical documents not admitted? Even the famed objections raised in certain films or writings cannot alter the truth.

For there were **five principal tests**, and **every book that failed any one of them** was rejected.

#### **The First Qualification: Prophetic or Apostolic Origin**

Firstly, a book must have been written by a **prophet of God**, or by an **apostle**, or by one who had close fellowship with an apostle, walking with them and being taught of them. This was the first measure of the Canon, especially concerning the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles.

#### **The Second Qualification: Divine Confirmation of the Writer**

Among the twelve apostles of Christ, whosoever was directly associated with them—if such a one wrote a book, that book was to be included in the Canon. Now ye must consider: was Luke a physician, or was he an apostle? Then why was his Gospel received? The answer is this: the first point of judgment was that if a book were written by a prophet or an apostle, or by one who walked in close fellowship with an apostle, such a book would be included.

At this point someone may question, “Why may not this or that book also be included in the Bible?” Then we reply: “Because we have the study of canonization, and we have the process whereby we must discern which books belong to the sacred Canon.”

Concerning this first point, write down the references: **Hebrews 1:1**—*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, and then in these last days He hath spoken unto us by His Son.* Also write **2 Peter 1:20–21**, which confirmed that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

### **The Second Point Stated Again**

What is the second point? It is this: **Doth God Himself bear witness that the writer is from Him?** I repeat it: Doth God confirm the writer whom ye are including in the Canon of Holy Scripture? These matters are somewhat technical, yet it is meet for us to grow in the knowledge of God.

Let us observe a reference that the matter may be made clearer. For when the sayings and works of Jesus Christ were included in Scripture, the Scripture itself confirmed that He was indeed from God.

### **Scriptural Confirmation of Divine Authority**

Let us read **Acts 2:22**. It is written: *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you.* Thus, it was not some man, nor some scholar, nor some prophet who confirmed Him, but **God Himself**.

So the words and works of that blessed One were confirmed of God. The Scripture itself beareth witness that He was from the Father. Write also these references for this second point: **John 3:2**, **Acts 2:22**, and **Hebrews 2:3**.

### **The Third Qualification: Harmony with the Message of Scripture**

What is the third measure? It is this: **Is the book in harmony with the overall message of the Bible, or is it contrary to it?** When books of the Old and New Testaments were included, the elders examined whether the writings—though composed in different eras, by different men, and in different circumstances—did yet speak the same doctrine as the rest of Scripture.

For though they were written by diverse individuals, in diverse ages, and in diverse places, yet they bore one **unifying theme**. There was no contradiction among them, but unity and agreement.

If ye read the Epistles of Paul and the Gospels, ye will find that both proclaim the same truth: the Gospels declare that Jesus is the Son of God, and Paul likewise declared Jesus Christ to be our Saviour, the Son of God. There is no discord betwixt them, but harmony.

Thus they said: “If ye would tear some writing and add it to Scripture, then first examine whether it is in agreement with the rest of Scripture, or whether it standeth in opposition.” Why should we accept a book which speaketh things that no other book in the sixty-six

proclaimed? Shall sixty-six witnesses stand on one side and one witness stand alone on the other?

### **Unity across the Testaments**

David wrote in one age, and Christ was born in another; yet David spake of Christ, saying, *the bulls have compassed me, and Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.* Here we see unity across the centuries. The sixty-six books display harmony, not contradiction.

When we take verses out of context, we fall into confusion. The fault lieth not in the Scripture, but in our own lack of learning and failure to read in context. One man came to me saying, “In one place it is written, *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*, and in another, *enter into thy closet and pray*. Shall I open my mouth, or shall I pray secretly?”

I jested with him, saying, “Pray in secret, but be sure to open thy mouth there also.” Yet the point remained: Scripture must be read in context. The value of context shall be discussed further when we begin the lectures on hermeneutics.

Write the references for this third point: **Deuteronomy 18:22** and **Galatians 1:8**.

### **The Fourth Qualification: Transformative Power**

What is the fourth requirement? It is this: **Doth the book reveal the power of God? Doth it change the lives of them that hear and read it?** In English we call this the *transformative effect*.

The sixty-six books bear loud testimony that whoso readeth them is changed thereby. And this also is proof that the Scriptures are inspired, for they transform the life of the reader. You and I are witnesses of this very thing.

So then, is that book the Word of God which changed lives? Let us read **Hebrews 4:12: For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword**, piercing and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Word of God is living and effective—it hath true power, not merely philosophical discourse nor scholarly argument. The Word hath effect.

### **The Fifth Qualification: Acceptance by the People of God**

And now the fifth and final qualification in Biblical canonicity: **Doth the people of God—those whom God hath chosen—receive that book as the Word of God?**

Ye recall the mention of the seventy years of captivity. It was said that Israel should go into seventy years of bondage, and afterwards God would deliver them. Daniel the prophet, reading in the book of Jeremiah, found this written; thus Daniel accepted Jeremiah’s writing as the Word of God.

How then shall we accept books of which neither Paul, nor Jesus Christ, nor any other inspired writer ever made mention? We receive only those books to which our Lord Himself gave witness.

Where it is written, *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that tressed out the corn*, this is from Deuteronomy; and *the labourer is worthy of his hire* is from the Gospel. When Paul cited both in one place, he thereby affirmed that he regarded both the Law (Deuteronomy) and the Gospels as Scripture.

