

Week 2: Observation

In this session, we'll begin to look practically at how to rightly interpret the Bible according to the rules and principles of sound hermeneutics (i.e. literal grammatical historical approach), which begins with right recognition of genre and thorough observation of the text.

PHASES OF INTERPRETATION:

I. Step #1: Prayer

- We cannot read the Word of God without the God of the Word. The Bible is the only book where the Author is with you every time you read it, we must read with God's aid through prayer.

II. Step #2: Genre-Identification

- **Genre Matters:** Harry Potter cannot be read like a math textbook. Likewise, Romans is not like Ecclesiastes and Matthew is not like Leviticus.
 - A. **Historical Narrative:** This Biblical genre describes actual historical events from God's perspective.
 - B. **Poetry and Songs:** This Biblical Genre reveals expressions of emotion to God.
 - C. **Law:** This Biblical genre reveals God's holiness, high moral standard, true justice, principles of government within a theocracy (God-ruled gov.), principles of health and safety, and God's pattern/order for acceptable worship.
 - D. **Wisdom:** This Biblical Genre reveals God's Wisdom, which far surpasses any worldly wisdom.
 - E. **Prophecy:** This Biblical Genre of Prophecy is a revelation from God to a particular person, a particular group of people, and sometimes a call to all humanity.
 - F. **Parables:** This Biblical Genre are stories with a punch-line.
 - G. **Letters:** This Biblical genre is revelation from God that was written for a specific occasion and purpose with a well identified audience by an apostle of Christ or apostolic associates.
 - H. **Apocalypse:** This Biblical genre speaks of the end times.

III. Step #3: Observation

- Observation is reading the Bible intentionally and seriously down to the details, rather than mindlessly reading too quickly.
- This step is not about asking the question: what does the text mean? Rather, observation is about simply asking: what does the text say?
 - Here are some helpful questions of observation in Bible reading:
 - A. Who is speaking/writing?
 - B. Why was the book written?
 - C. Who are the people in the book?

- D. Where is the author/audience location?
- E. What is the genre?
- F. What occasion is the author addressing in his speaking/writing?
- G. When was the book written? Where was the book written?
- H. To whom are they speaking/writing? (Who is the audience?)
- I. Where were the recipients of the book living?
- J. What is the context? Or where does this passage take place?
- K. What does this passage say?
- L. What is the emphasis?
- M. What are the word repetitions (key words)?
- N. What is the unusual or shocking word?
- O. What is compared/contrasted?
- P. When did this event happen in relation to other events?
- Q. When was this prophecy fulfilled or has it been?
- R. Where are the conjunctive words?
 - i. Therefore (cause/effect), because (reason), so that (purpose), although (contrast), just as (comparison), first/last of all (series of facts), if (condition), indeed (emphasis)
- S. Are there any lists/genealogies?
- T. What is the author conveying in the usages of figures of speech?
- U. Where are the verbs? (To determine to action either happening or being commanded).
- V. What does this text say about the Bible?
- W. What does this text say about God? Jesus Christ? The Holy Spirit?
- X. What does this text say about humanity?
- Y. What does this text say about salvation? Eternity?
- Z. What does this text say about the church?

IV. **Activity:** Read John 3:16-18 and make 10 observations of the text using the questions from above. You can do it!