

## Understanding and Using the Correct **Hermeneutic** 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Acts 20:24-32

*We have already worked through an overview on the Inspiration, Inerrancy, Infallibility, Continuity, and Clarity of Scripture. God's Word is God-breathed (not man-made), without error, will never fail or contradict itself, and is intended to be understood and believed when properly studied and applied.*

### I. Definitions

- **"Hermeneutic"**: A method, system, or theory of interpretation.
- **"Hermeneutics"**: "The study of correct methods of interpretation (especially interpretation of Scripture)."<sup>1</sup>
- **"Exegesis"**: "The process of interpreting a text of Scripture."<sup>2</sup>
- **"Normative"**: The normal way of doing things or the normal way of interpreting communication or literature.

### II. The Literal (or Normal), Grammatical, Historical Hermeneutic

Discovering and understanding authorial intent is the main goal of the Bible reader. What was the author's intended meaning (A.I.M.)? Looking to God's Word to determine what God's says instead of making the Bible say what the reader wants the Bible to say. God is in the "driver's seat" when it comes to Scripture's meaning—man is not! **Meaning is derived from the Text ("exegesis") and is not read into the Text ("eisegeses") by the reader.**

#### A. Literal (or Normal)

Reading Scripture as it would normally be read and understood at its face value or as normally interpreted. Words carry meaning and every word is interpreted in the normal sense of interpretation unless the author clearly makes a distinction that a non-literal interpretation, symbol or image is intended such as similes or metaphors ("*I am the Door*", "*The Day of the Lord*," **Daniel 9:24-27**).

***The Literary Principle:*** A clear understanding for figurative language such as imagery or symbolism when the author makes it clear that such is indeed his intention.

#### B. Grammatical

The words and grammar used for turning these words into sentences and literature really matter. This means that we do not make words become something they were not intended to be or to mean things that they did not originally mean.

<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology. p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

*The Grammatical Principle: “We ought not merely give lip service to the grammar, then ignore it when it is not expedient.”<sup>3</sup>*

### C. **Historical**

There is a historical context in which every passage of Scripture is written. The words of God are indeed historical and are not myth or fiction. Also, there was a very real historical situation in which these Scriptures were written and the interpretation of the author’s intended meaning must not be divorced from the historical setting in which they were originally written. This means that names of nations and peoples matter (i.e. *Nation of Israel, Israelites, Church, etc.*).

*“History provides the basis for theology, and the two are inextricably mixed. For instance, if the historical reality of the resurrection never occurred, then our faith is pointless, as Paul argues (1 Cor 15:11-19). Indeed the facts of history loom large in the interpretive process.”<sup>4</sup>*

***The Historical Principle: “It can’t mean now what it didn’t mean then.”***

## III. Discouraged Hermeneutical Systems or Methodologies

### A. **Allegorical Approach**

Does not deny the inspiration of Scripture but believes that words carry different meanings today than they did originally. Birthed out of Greek philosophy and was a leading form of approaching the Scriptures in the medieval ages. Origen and Augustine are two leading proponents of this as well as the Roman Catholic Church.

### B. **Higher Criticism Approach**

Denying that God’s Word is inspired or without error and puts man at that center of interpreting and adding meaning to God’s Word. This began in Germany during the mid-1800’s and traveled over to America through liberalism. This false teaching gave birth to the Fundamentalism movement in America in the early 1900’s as God’s Word and its divine authority was questioned in the hearts of many professing believers and Fundamentalists refused to cave.

### C. **Spiritualizing Approach (almost a hybrid of allegorical and higher criticism)/ Semi-literal or semi-allegorical**

Taking names or themes and spiritualizing them to mean something that is not inherent in the Text or giving them a double-meaning that is applicable to either a different group of individuals or an entirely different group of people than was intended in the author’s intended meaning. (“Israel,” “Church”, “Day,”, etc.).

***This is vital to Covenant theology (as opposed to Dispensational theology).***

<sup>3</sup> Mark Hassler, *Grammatical-Historical Hermeneutics*.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.