BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, AN INTRODUCTION

1. The art of interpreting scripture is called HERMENEUTICS.

2. The scriptures must be RIGHTLY DIVIDED not WRONGLY CONNECTED.

3. Scripture is both HUMAN and DIVINE.

4. The tension between ETERNAL relevance and HISTORICAL particularity demands the need for interpretation.

5. The Bible was not originally written TO us, but it was written FOR us.

6. The aim of good interpretation is to get THE PLAIN MEANING OF THE TEXT.

7. A good interpretation of scripture is based on common-sense guidelines which we call hermeneutical PRINCIPLES or, ‘EXEGESIS.’

8. Two major contrasts of Biblical interpretation:

   Exegesis: TO DRAW OUT OF THE SCRIPTURES WHAT IT SAYS
   Eisegesis: TO READ INTO THE SCRIPTURES WHAT IT DOESN’T SAY

9. The key to good exegesis is to learn to ask of it the RIGHT QUESTIONS.

10. Principles For Proper Biblical Exegesis:

    a. CONTEXT

       Who is the author and recipients?
       What are the historical particulars surrounding the text?
       What is the occasion for this writing?
       What is the message the original author intended to the original audience?

    b. AUDIENCE RELEVANCE – Who is this speaking to

    c. COVENANT UNDERSTANDING – Is this the Old or New Covenant?

    d. GENRES – The type of literature

       Narrative, law History, Wisdom, Poetry, Proverb, Prophetic and
       Apocalyptic, Parabolic, Epistles

    e. LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

    f. ORIGINAL LANGUAGES

    g. INTERTEXTUALITY – Interpreting scripture with scripture

11. The proper order of interpretation

    a. What did the text ORIGINALLY mean to the ORIGINAL AUDIENCE?
    b. How does the text RELATE to ME TODAY?
    c. What PRINCIPLES can I draw from the text?
    d. How can I APPLY those principles to MY LIFE?
NEW TESTAMENT GENRE, THE EPISTLES

Of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, TWENTY-ONE are EPISTLES.

In the Greek, the word "epistle" means "LETTER" or "MESSAGE," so an epistle is a letter or some type of WRITTEN CORRESPONDANCE—most likely written on a scroll.

The epistles can be divided up into two groups: PAULINE Epistles (epistles written by the Apostle Paul) and GENERAL Epistles.

Here are some guidelines for studying epistles.

1. It is important to note that when you are reading epistles, you are literally reading SOMEONE ELSE’S MAIL.

2. Epistles have a FORMAT.

Just like modern letters, New Testament letters follow a format. While our letters usually start with a date, then a salutation, the body of the letter and a close, New Testament letters typically follow the format:

   - Name of Writer
   - Name of Recipients
   - Personal Greeting
   - Personal Prayer, Wish, or Expression of Thanks
   - Body of Letter
   - Final Greetings and Farewell

3. Read the entire epistle AS A WHOLE and interpret the individual parts in light of the whole.

4. Interpret epistles in light of their HISTORICAL CONTEXT.

5. The Epistles were not written to be a SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY textbook although we do find much rich theology in there. The New Testament epistles contain theology APPLIED to the life of the Church.

6. All of the epistles are OCCASIONAL DOCUMENTS (i.e. arising out of and intended for a specific occasion). They were written out of the 1st century context of the author to the context of the original recipients.

7. Many times we must RECONSTRUCT THE OCCASION of the epistle, to do this we must start with questions:

   - Who is writing the letter?
   - Who is the audience of the letter?
   - What could have prompted the writing of the letter?
   - What situation does the author face while writing his letter?
   - What problems does the author address in the letter?
   - Does the writer state his purpose for writing the letter?
   - What are the major themes, concepts, and words in the letter?

8. However, epistles are more than just time bound documents; they are words INSPIRED by the Holy Spirit, offering TRUTH and AUTHORITATIVE INSTRUCTION to the church in EVERY AGE.