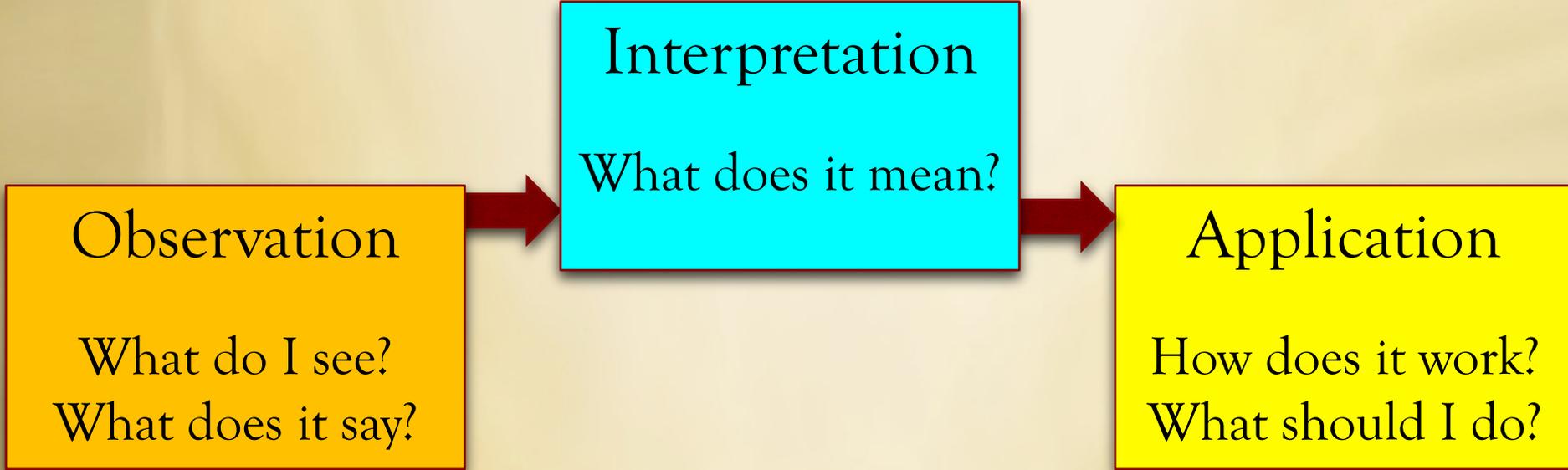

Grasping God's Word

Interpretation: Part 1





What is Interpretation?

- Interpretation is asking the question, “What does it mean?”
 - Not “What does it mean to you?”
 - Not “What do you think it means?”
 - Not “What do you want it to mean?”
 - Not “What should it mean in the 21st century?” – we’ll touch on that in application.
- Proper interpretation can *only* follow from good observation.



What is Meaning?

- Meaning is not subjective.
- The correct meaning is the meaning intended by the original author, as inspired by God.
- The goal of interpretation is to understand the meaning intended by the original author – the meaning inspired by God.



General Principles of Interpretation

1. Meaning is determined by context
 - A. Literary Context
 - B. Historical Context
2. Good observation is the foundation for good interpretation
3. The plain sense is usually good sense



Seven Hazards to Avoid

- Misreading the text
- Distorting the text
- Contradicting the text
- Subjectivism
- Relativism
- Overconfidence
- Missing figurative language



Misreading the Text

- Taking things out of context
- Not seeing all the words
- Good observation is essential



Distorting the Text

- How would you distort?
- What is the difference between misreading and distorting?
- How do you keep from distorting a passage?
- Distorted passages?



Contradicting the Text

- Interpretation that is in direct conflict with the text
- Modern day examples
- God's Spirit speaking to you will NEVER contradict the scripture.



Subjectivism

- Use your mind. – Mark 12:30
- Proper interpretation is intellectually defensible.



Relativism

- Meaning does not change over time.
- Consensus interpretation may change over time.
- Application will change over time but not meaning.



Overconfidence

- No one has ever completely mastered interpretation.
- There is always something new to learn.



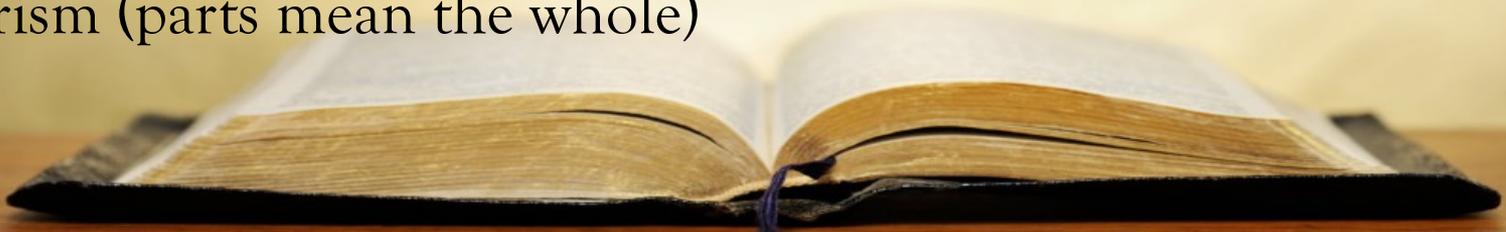
Missing Figurative Language

- The plain sense is usually good sense, but not always
- Figurative language can be flagged by
 - Context
 - Other Scripture



Figures of Speech

- Anthropomorphism (making human)
- Apostrophe (addressing imaginary person)
- Euphemism (less offensive)
- Hyperbole (exaggeration)
- Hypocatastasis (implied likeness)
- Idiom (cultural phrase)
- Merism (parts mean the whole)
- Metaphor (comparison)
- Paradox (contrary things)
- Personification (human characteristics)
- Rhetorical question (obvious question with no response)
- Simile (comparison with “like” or “as”)



Disagreement After Good Interpretation

- There can only be one meaning, but we won't always know it.
- Some passages are very clear while others are not as clear.
- What do we do when we disagree?
 - We show humility and love.
 - At times, we should consider various other options and hold ours loosely.



Some Barriers to Proper Interpretation

We are separated from the original biblical text by time and distance which creates barriers of:

- Language
- Culture
- Literary Genre
- Communication



Some Resources to Help

- Atlas
- Bible Dictionary
- Bible Handbook
- Commentaries
- Interlinear Texts



Summary

- The author had an intended meaning. What is it?
- Good observation is the foundation for good interpretation.
- Interpretation takes effort and thinking.
- The Holy Spirit will guide.
- The context is key.
- Resources are available.



Some passages to Read

- Remember that proper interpretation can only follow from good observation.
- Philippians 2:1-11
- Matthew 18:18-20
- Philippians 4:6-7
- A tough one: 1 Corinthians 11:1-16



Questions/Discussion

