

Biblical Studies

Preachers of The Word are obviously to be men of The Word. Before preaching to others, they must preach to themselves. To feed hungry souls they themselves must hunger for 'the sincere milk of the Word' (1 Peter 2 v 2). To declare the whole counsel of God, they must know that counsel. Men training for the ministry are expected to be private students of the word, meditating on the Law of the Lord 'day and night' themselves (Psalm 1 v 2) rather than seeing the Bible as a textbook for sermons.

This requires that men account the scriptures to be the authoritative word of God, not of man. Our approach is shaped by the realisation that 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God' (2 Timothy 3 v 16) and is therefore infallible. Additionally, we believe that God has preserved his word in the authentic texts which underlie our Authorised Version. Our approach, then, is one of the profoundest reverence for Scripture. We are not above the Word to criticise, but under the Word to obey it.

All study is conducted in the atmosphere of worship. Our attitude is one with Samuel of old who said, 'speak; for thy servant heareth' (1 Samuel 3 v 10). The study of scripture is no mere academic pursuit, but the desire 'to see Jesus'. To this end we pray for the assistance of The Holy spirit whose ministry is to make Christ known. To miss Christ in the Scripture is to miss all (Luke 24 v 27). Truth is to be received with an attitude of praise (Romans 11 v 33).

To aid a fuller understanding of the Bible, study of it seeks to deduce any particular purpose for which the portion was written, authorship, historical setting, structure, key words and phrases, and how the passage relates to the rest of the Word of God. Where passages appear difficult, the so-called 'Analogy of Faith' is used, comparing scripture with scripture. Commentaries that accord with our doctrinal position are consulted, along with the writings of the Puritans in their treatment of any given part of scripture. Unbelieving, liberal scholarship is only raised for the purposes of rebuttal.

The course takes students into the whole of scripture, commencing with the Doctrine of Scripture itself. We then proceed to an Old Testament Introduction, Hermeneutics (interpretation of scripture), a New Testament introduction and exegesis (explanation of scripture). Finally, we study Old Testament Exegesis, including a consideration of its poetry and prophecy.

Topics taught in the three years

2018

Introduction to Biblical Studies

Hermeneutics:

Introduction to Hermeneutics

History of Biblical Interpretation

Principles of Biblical

Interpretation

Application

Relationship Between Old and

New Testament

Typology

Interpreting:

Prophecy

Narrative

N.T. Epistles

Parables and Allegories

New Testament Introduction:

The Sovereignty of God in the Inter

Testament Period

The Synoptic Problem

Book Studies:

Joshua

Ezra and Nehemiah

Song of Solomon

Ephesians

Colossians

Revelation

The Kenosis Theory

2019

NT Introduction:

Authorship Issues

Textual Criticism

Historical, Social and Political Life

Overview of NT books

NT Exegesis: Gospel & Acts:

(1) Prologue

(2) Discourse

(3) Parable

(4) Miracles

(5) Eschatological

(6) Conversation

(7) Didactic

(8) Warning

(9) Use of OT

(10) Crucifixion

NT Exegesis: Philipians

(1) Overview and Greeting

(2) Thanksgiving and Prayer

(3) Optimistic Prisoner 1

(4) Optimistic Prisoner 2

(5) Humble Cross-Bearer

(6) Harmless Evangelist

(7) Thoughtful Administrator

(8) Concerned Ex-Pharisee

(9) Single Minded Follower

(10) Exemplary Pilgrim

(11) Tactful Pastor

(12) Grateful Recipient

Book Studies:

Thessalonians

Survey of Genesis

2020

OT introduction:

Historical, Political, Social background
Old Testament overview of all OT books
The Pentateuch, with special reference to Leviticus and its typical teaching

Grace in The Wilderness: Gospel Lessons from Exodus
Preaching from Proverbs, an introduction and some texts
Book of Ruth
Refuting objections raised regarding the OT
Understanding and preaching Isaiah
Obadiah

Preaching Christ from the OT, including pre-incarnate appearances of The Son of God
David the King of Israel and the Plan of Redemption
Expounding the Psalms
Book of Malachi
Book of Esther: The Amazing providence of God

Content of Some Lectures:

Hermeneutics: History of Biblical Interpretation:

It is important to consider how significant interpreters of the past have approached Scripture, especially more difficult passages, since their insights can still be of great value and the occasions when some of them went astray can serve as pedagogical reminders of the inherent dangers of not consistently employing a correct hermeneutic.

With those considerations in mind, a broad overview was undertaken, initially of the various Jewish schools of interpretation, noting their strengths and weaknesses. The Church Fathers were then briefly surveyed before looking more fully at the Antiochene and Alexandrian Schools that arose in the early centuries of the church. The contributions of Augustine and Jerome were evaluated before summarizing and critiquing the largely faulty hermeneutics that emerged during the Medieval period.

Special attention was given to the recovery made at the time of the Reformation, with special focus on the works of Luther and Calvin, followed by mention of the developments made during the Puritan era. The hugely detrimental effects of rationalism brought about by The Enlightenment were then described before key figures such as Schleiermacher, Wellhausen, and Bultmann were assessed. Finally, some conclusions were drawn for our own interpretation of God's Word.

Hermeneutics: Principles of Biblical Interpretation:

Having laid the groundwork of the introductory lecture and the consideration of the hermeneutics of those that have gone before, this lecture sought to establish the overriding principles that need to guide our interpretation of Scripture. Starting from 2 Peter 1:20, the principle was established that nobody has the right to foist on to any text their perceived interpretation of it; rather, the text must be allowed to speak for itself and the author's intended meaning must be sought.

Reflection was made on the unity of the sense of Scripture, an important guiding principle for all accurate and proper interpretation. This was followed by an explanation of the *Analogia Fidei* or 'Analogy of Faith', which states that every text of Scripture must be interpreted in light of the rest. From the preceding considerations the Reformed historical-grammatical-theological hermeneutical principle was shown to have its basis. These three coordinates of history (the setting of the text), grammar (the words and literary structure of the text), and theology (the meaning of the text) were then developed in greater detail as they impinge on sound hermeneutics. These principles can be applied to different literary genres within the Bible such as narrative, poetry, prophecy, and epistle.

Hermeneutics: Interpreting Prophecy (2 lectures):

At the beginning of these lectures, we considered our Lord's division of the OT Scriptures from Luke 24 v 44: "the law of Moses...the prophets...and the psalms." "The law of Moses" included the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the OT; "the prophets" comprised the main historical books (excepting Ruth) as far as the end of 2 Kings (all being written by prophets) as well as those books now commonly called the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel etc. with the exception of Daniel); and "the Psalms", the most highly prized of the books often referred to as "the writings" (the other books of the canonical Scriptures).

Under the section denominated “the prophets”, it is often the way to distinguish the books by mentioning “the Earlier Prophets” (Joshua, Judges, and so on) and “the Later Prophets” (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the others), and these “Later prophets” are usually subdivided into Major and Minor Prophets. The latter especially were set in their historical contexts,

The first mention of a “prophet” was with respect to Abraham (Gen 20:7), but, according to John Brown, the term came to be used in a more restricted sense. Moses became a ‘standard of comparison for all future prophets, and all fundamental, classic features of a prophet are found in him.’ Prophets knew a specific call; felt the special presence of God; and received the divine Word and they were responsible for delivering it faithfully.

Consideration was then given to the comments of John Brown of Edinburgh on Hebrews 1:1, on the way the prophets communicated the word of prophecy: for example, by ‘typical representations and emblematical actions.’

We also considered how the Word came to them as spokesmen of the Covenant; and, in delivering their messages, it was observed how often encouragement was given to the godly remnant while condemnation was pronounced upon those who only appeared to be God’s people (e.g. Ezek.9:4).

One thing is clear from a study of their several writings: there was only one way of salvation and only one church of God in every age.

Some principles of interpretation were then stated:

1. A question which needs to be asked is, what did the prophecy mean for the original audience?
2. In order to understand the prophecies, we need to see how OT prophecies are dealt with in the NT.
3. It needs to be borne in mind that some of them are conditional in nature (e.g. Jer. 18:7-10).
4. The Prophets, especially the Former prophets, interpret history.
5. Often there is more than one fulfilment and there may be multiple fulfilments.
6. Christ is to be found in the prophetic writings (Lk. 24:27, 44; Jn. 5:39; Acts 10:43) and therefore we need to look for Him (1 Pet. 1:3-12).
7. Our aim must be so to perceive the truth that our hearts will be warmed and drawn out to Him whom our souls love (Lk. 24:32; 1 Pet. 1:8).

New Testament Introduction: The Sovereignty of God in the Intertestamental Period [Malachi to Matthew]:

While knowledge of the period between Old & New Testaments is not vital to understanding the Gospel, such knowledge is important for an accurate understanding of the background and context of the Gospels. Significant changes took place in the religious leadership and direction within the Inter-Testament period. We can learn from this period of history, despite the Old Testament canon being closed. Under the same principle, we also learn from the history of the Christian Church - after the New Testament Canon was closed. The religious scene, upon which the curtain is drawn in Malachi, is quite different, however, from the religious scene in the late first century.

For example, there are no Synagogues, Pharisees, Sadducees or Sanhedrin-Councils recorded in the OT. Yet in the New Testament Gospel accounts they are a regular feature. Then we can also see how, under the Sovereignty of God, a political and language infrastructure developed in that period. A development, which was conducive to the rapid spread of the Gospel after the birth, death and resurrection of Christ!

In conclusion, lessons were drawn from this period of time are for warning and encouragement.

Book Study – Joshua:

In the first of two lectures, a brief personal history of Joshua was given followed by consideration of the historical setting, date and authorship of the book, together with an overview of its overall structure. Following this, there was an introduction to the book’s rich potential for pastoral and evangelistic themes, along with its views and glimpses of a greater than Joshua who was to come. The second lecture concentrated on a closer look at some of the passages of the book, with emphasis on their spiritual application.

N.T. Exegesis: Gospels and Acts (1 & 2) Prologue and Discourse (2 lectures):

These two lectures were the first in a series of ten. The two lectures were a general introduction and an overview to the four Gospel narratives, with an overview of the book of Acts.

1/ A general introduction to the four Gospel narratives was presented, demonstrating that each narrative evidences a specific purpose or purposes hence the presence of both differing material and chronology as directed by the Holy Spirit. This has been likened to the view of the four 'beasts' (or cherubim) in Revelation 4:7, where four faces are seen, that of a lion, suggestive of rule or power, a calf, suggestive of submission and service, a man, suggestive of intelligence and finally an eagle, suggestive of swiftness and soaring in the heights. All four cherubim in Ezekiel 1:10 had four faces, but a different aspect was presented depending on the position of the observer. (For more material, students were directed to 'Four views of Christ' by Andrew Jukes).

2/ Matthew, a Jew, and a former official in Roman employment (as a publican) presents Christ as King of the Jews. Genealogy begins with Abraham and David. Christ is also seen as Lawgiver (Sermon on the Mount) and as Prophet (Gospel age and End times). Over 40 explicit quotations from Old Testament connect the life of Christ with the Old Testament. The nature of prophecy in Chapter 2 was noted, namely literal, typical, analogical and according to sense. Christ is also seen as Teacher. Six teaching blocks. Reason for teaching in parables with interpretation of Sower, and Wheat and Tares in Chapter 13. Emphasis very much on Christ's teaching, not His actions.

3/ Mark, a servant, both of Paul and Barnabas, and later of Peter. Writing from Rome (1 Peter 5:13) with eye-witness testimony of Peter, to a non-Jewish audience. Explanation of Aramaic terms. 606 of 661 verses paralleled directly in Matthew. Emphasis on what Christ did, hence theme of seeing yet not believing by disciples. Like a tract. As though emphasis is 'Don't be like us! Don't be slow to believe!' Purpose of miracles (actions) emphasised (Chapter 2:9 – that ye may know). Great vividness! Use of 'immediately'/straightway' etc. Actions in first part of book. Power over elements, need, disease, death, the Devil. Second section. Teaching regarding Calvary. Chapter 8:31-33. Peter rebuked. Again, Ch 9:31/2 and note 'again' in Chapter 10:32. Final section, seen especially in final Chapter. The disciples would not even believe eyewitnesses! But if they will finally believe, and preach the gospel, **they** will see signs following.

4/ John, beloved disciple lying on bosom of Christ sees Christ in bosom of the Father. Concepts – light, the Word, etc. Humanity and Deity of Christ. '**I AM**' sayings yet thirsty, weary, hungry. Sovereignty of God in salvation a key theme. Also coming age of Holy Spirit described. And purpose in Chapter 20:30/1. '**That ye may believe**'. Signs, miracles in first half of narrative contrasted with 'teaching blocks' in Matthew.

5/ Luke, as observant physician, tells all that Jesus began both to do and teach (Acts 1:1). Life and times of Jesus Christ, as opposed to Acts, life and times of Spirit of Christ shown in his witnesses. (Hebrews 2:4). All types and conditions of men and women seen – as if the surgery of the 'Physicians of Souls'! Confirming believers (e.g. Theophilus) in their faith. Prayer emphasised. Much rejoicing! Evangelistic/gracious nature of parables (Good Samaritan/Prodigal Son etc).

6/ Acts Luke author. Emphasis on work of Holy Spirit in witnesses. Growth and life of the local church. Centrality of the resurrection in apostolic preaching. Apostolic method at Thessalonica (Chapter 17:3). Apostolic hermeneutic in Acts 15:16/7 re Tabernacle of David and Amos 9:11/2. Structure from Chapter 1: 8, Jerusalem, Peter, Chapters 1-7, Judea and Samaria, Peter, Chapters 8 – 12, and uttermost part of the earth, Paul, Chapters 13 – 28. Giving/coming of Holy Spirit in each section – Pentecost, House of Cornelius and Ephesus. Chapters 2, 10 and 19.