**God’s Plan for History**

**The Hermeneutical Imperative**

**Introduction**

In this lesson we are going to consider the issue of hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics is just a fancy word for “how you study the Bible.”

We will look at:

1. The meaning of “hermeneutics.”
2. The importance of hermeneutics.
3. The main methods of interpretation.
4. How the method of interpretation affects our interpretation. (How the process affect the result)
5. **The meaning of “hermeneutics.”** 
   1. **The dictionary definition — Merriam-Webster:** 
      1. *The study of the methodological principles of interpretation (as of the Bible);*
      2. *A method or principle of interpretation.*
   2. **Definition of “Biblical Hermeneutics:”**

*“Hermeneutics…is the science and art of interpreting the Bible.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

* 1. **Basic Statement —** Biblical Hermeneutics involves the setting of the principles and methods for understanding the Scriptures and the task of applying these principles and methods in the interpreting process.

1. **The importance of hermeneutics.** 
   1. **Because it tells us how to interpret the Bible —** This method is often referred to as the “Grammatical—Contextual—Historical Method of Interpretation.” (Dan 1 & 2)
      1. **Grammatical —** This relates to the study of words and how they are put together.
      2. **Contextual —** This is the study of the context in which the words appear.
      3. **Historical —** This is the study of the time period in which the words were written.
   2. **Because it gives us clear limits to our interpretation.**
2. **The main methods of interpretation.** 
   1. **Allegorical Method of interpretation.** 
      1. **Definition of the allegorical method.**

“The allegorical method of biblical interpretation assumes that biblical stories should be interpreted by seeking the “spiritual” meaning to which the liberal sense points.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

“Allegorizing is searching for a hidden or a secret meaning underlying but remote from and unrelated in reality to the more obvious meaning of the text. In other words the literal reading is a sort of code, which needs to be deciphered to determine the more significant and hidden meaning.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

* + 1. **Dangers of the allegorical method.** 
       1. It does not limit itself to the interpretation of the words of Scripture.
       2. The basis of authority ceases to be the words of Scripture and becomes the mind of the interpreter.
       3. The allegorical interpretation cannot be tested [Observation, Interpretation, ~~Correlation~~].
    2. **Defense of the allegorical method. (Gal 4:21-31)**
  1. **The Literal method of interpretation.** 
     1. **Clarification —** Consistency is what counts.
     2. **Definition of the Literal Method —** “The literal method of interpretation is that method that gives to each word the same exact meaning it would have in normal, ordinary, customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking.”[[4]](#footnote-4)
     3. **Objections to the Literal Method.** 
        1. The Bible contains figures of speech.
        2. The Bible is a spiritual book and must therefore be understood (interpreted) spiritually.
        3. Because the Old Testament provides the New Testament believer with types, we understand that those Old Testament passages had deeper and greater meaning than the words of the text could contain.

1. **How the method of interpretation that affect our interpretation.** 
   1. The literal method of interpretation is controlled by the grammar, context, and historical setting.
   2. The allegorical method of interpretation has no controls over it because it goes beyond the words of the text.
2. **Conclusion.**
   1. **Statement —** God has given us His Word in words in a way that it can and should be understood.
   2. **Principles:**
      1. Interpret Literally.
      2. Compare prophecy with prophecy.
      3. Be open to time intervals (Isa 9; Dan 9:24-27).
      4. Interpret figures of speech as figures of speech.

1. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Grenz, Guretzki & Nordling, Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999) 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Zuck, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Pentecost. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)