

- *It seems like the Bible can be challenging to understand.....*
- *What are some things we need to look out for?*
- *What are some tools that can help the average person understand it better?*
- *Answers to these questions and more are in our lesson today entitled.....*

The Bible didn't say that!, part 2

3 tools to keep you from making mistakes as you read

Yvon Prehn, Teacher

- **Review and introduction**
- In our previous lesson we looked at the big, theological word “Hermeneutics” that in summary means the guidelines we use to properly understand the Bible so that we can apply it in the way God wants it applied.
- Instead of simply listing “Hermeneutical Principles,” guidelines to help us interpret things properly, which can be very helpful, but often don't make a lot of sense out of context,
- We looked at Jeremiah 29:11, the very popular verse that says, *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”*
- And by applying hermeneutical principles of looking at the words in their original language, at the context of history, and context of the passage itself, and finally the tool of Principlizing we got a correct interpretation of it.
- Please go to www.Bible805.com for the complete lesson.
- **In this lesson, here are THREE more Hermeneutical tools that will help us properly interpret the Bible**
- **1. Understand genre**—is it a comic book or a cookbook?
- **2. Beware of the hapax**—passages or words mentioned only once
- **3. Embrace humility**—we know so little and so many have gone before us, not one of us is the final authority or expert and so we apply this by using the tools given to us by others in the Body of Christ.
- We'll briefly look at #1 & #2 and then I'll have a series of demonstrations of tools that will help us with #3.
- **#1—Understand Genre, comic book or cookbook?**
- This is a foundational tool that we must understand, or we will not interpret the book that we are reading correctly.
- This is not something that is unique to the Bible.
- Genre is simply the type of writing something is and in many cases we intuitively know what this means.
- For example, we expect a comic book or graphic novel to tell a story; we expect a cookbook to give us directions on how to make something.
- **There are a variety of genres in the Bible—don't read them in the same way!**
- Different commentators have different lists, but most include something like this:
- Narrative—story form, history, this is one of the easiest to read, but we need to be careful to not take as a command or example for us to follow that is given primarily as simply an example. The graphic novels (comic book) forms of the Bible consist primarily of these parts of the Bible.
- Wisdom Literature—Proverbs, (similar to a cookbook) a recipe if you will, for a godly life. **HOWEVER, it is not a book of promises—if you follow them,**

chances are higher you will get this result, but not promised.

- Poetry—Hebrew poetry different than ours but similar in the use of images.
- Prophecy—not only foretelling, but “forth-telling” more on this later, an area full of challenges.
- Epistles—, a letter, and it is vitally important to understand the specific setting that prompted the letter
- **We will go over the various genres in detail when we read through the Bible**
- An excellent resource until then—
- *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart
- As we go through the Bible in our lessons on reading through it in Chronological Order, we’ll go over the various genres as we encounter them.
- **#2—Beware of the hapax—passages or words mentioned only once**
- The Bible has a tremendous amount of repetition in it—a comfort over the years of writing of our unchanging God and His unchanging plans for our salvation. But not everything is repeated and that can constitute a hapax.
- Definition of a hapax *“Hapax is an ancient Greek word that means “once.” Applied to the Bible, it refers to statements, ideas or words that appear only once in it. Within the structure of the Bible as a whole, several stories are only told once and never cross-referenced again; some facts are recorded once and never again; certain ideas are expressed once and never again; a few Hebrew and Greek words are used once and never again. Each one of these is a hapax. The following principle of interpretation should be obvious: Never build a doctrine or draw a teaching from an unclear or debated hapax.”*
- Gilbert Bilezikian, *Christianity 101* (highly recommended book)
- **He goes on to explain it by saying**
- That there is so much in Scripture that is clear, we do not need to *“press into service difficult texts that are better left aside when not understood. Those texts had meaning when first written, but such meanings are now lost because of our ignorance of ancient languages and customs. . . .*
- *Humility before God’s revelation requires that we recognize our limitations, using well what we do understand and admitting our ignorance for the rest.”*
- One of the best examples of a hapax (and one that has been terribly misused)
- Is in 1 Cor. 15:29 where Paul makes a passing reference to “baptism for the dead.”
- Dr. B goes on to say, “He neither endorses the practice or explains it. The allusion is unclear....it is never confirmed elsewhere in Scriptures.”
- Even so some groups have elevated it to doctrine (e.g. Mormon church) and that is Biblically a mistake.
- **How to spot a hapax**
- There are many tools we can use to do this.
- Some (I’ll discuss them in a minute) can specifically help you spot one; define one.
- One of the best ways that takes more time is to consistently read the entire Bible so that you will know when something stands out when it is only mentioned once.
- Not doing that and just jumping around from short passage to short passage puts you in danger of pulling out something and saying, “BUT the BIBLE said this or that” and drawing an incorrect conclusion....
- If so, you’ve been bitten by the Hapax! (just kidding!)

- **#3—Embrace humility**
- This final bit of hermeneutic advice is the direct result of all the previous lessons we've had on Hermeneutics.
- For everything from defining genre, to discovering a hapax, from defining the right word in an original language to understanding the culture and context, to proper application of a passage, each of us needs humility.
- The Bible is such a vast treasure and though many have spent their lives studying it, all would agree that the more you study, the more you realize what you don't know.
- In those instances, humility is always the best position to be in because then we know there is always more we can learn.
- But NOT a lazy humility, but one that works hard to learn from others. We check what the ones who have gone before us have written in both the Bible and other resources.
- **Here are some of my favorite tools for doing this**
- Criteria for my choice, and why no Bible software
- Easily available on your desktop and phone
- Free or mostly free
- Easy to use and I'll demonstrate them all—go to Bible805.com for links to videos of demonstrations and my comments on them (never any kind of financial or other arrangements with these, of course other than my own www.Bible805.com)
- YouVersion Bible App, www.Bible.com
- Blue Letter Bible, www.blueletterbible.org
- Biblegateway, www.biblegateway.com
- Precept Austin, www.preceptaustin.org
- Wikipedia, www.Wikipedia.org
- Bible805, my site that links to various media forms of teaching the Bible, www.Bible805.com
- I am in the process of creating demonstrations of each of these that you can link to from the Bible805.com site or go directly to the Bible805 YouTube channel to access.
- They are wonderful resources, and my prayer is that you will use them fully to better know, trust and apply the Bible.
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