

# How to Study the Bible: Recognizing Genre (part 1)



by L. S. Baker, Jr.

# Introduction

## QUESTION:

Have you ever wanted to know more about the Bible? To study for yourself?

## PURPOSE:

To teach you what to look out for in the text

## SERIES:

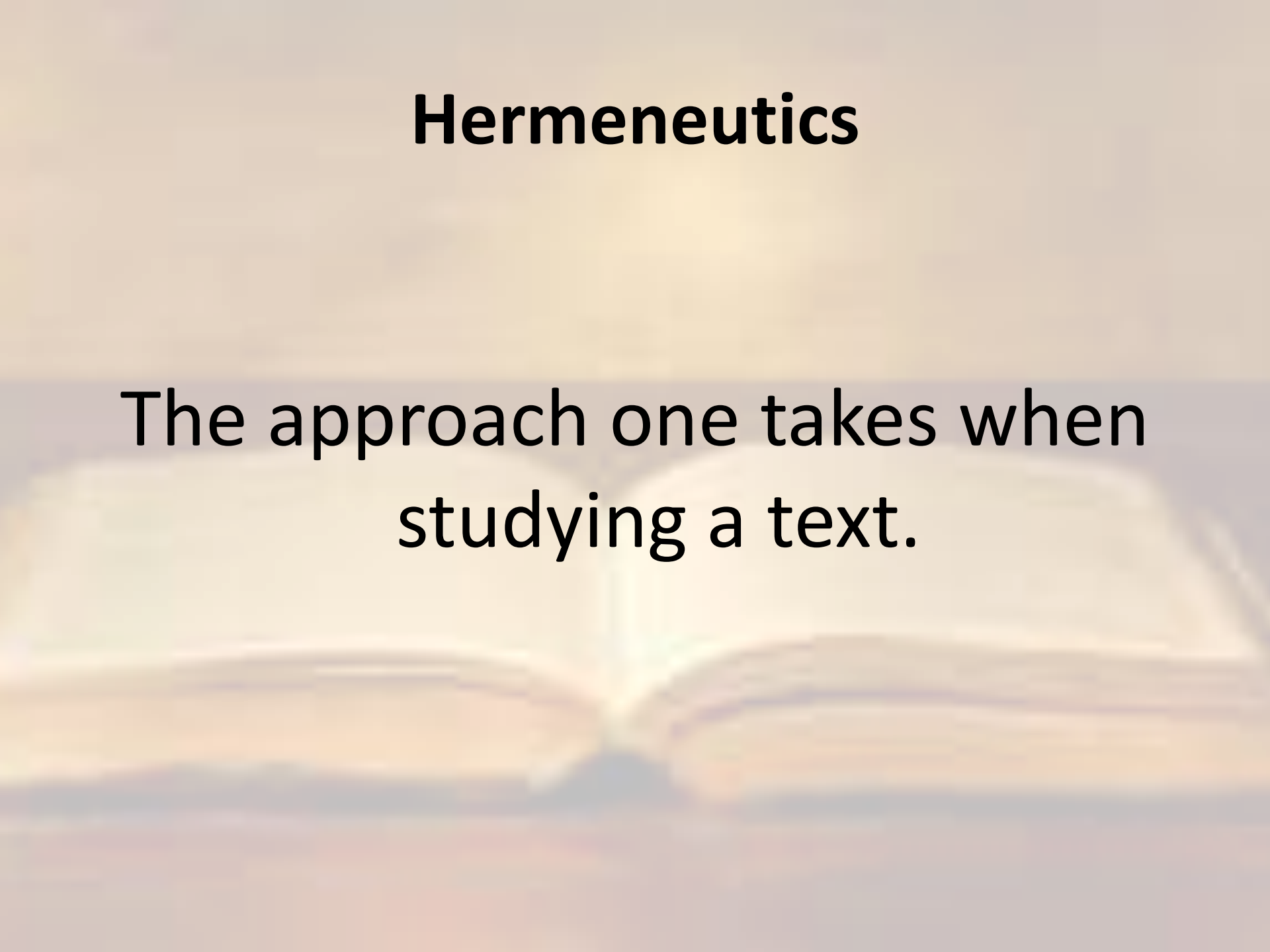
2-part series, each of 2 parts

How to **Study** the Bible

How to **Share** the Bible

# Hermeneutics

The approach one takes when studying a text.

The background of the slide is a blurred image of an open book, showing the pages and the spine. The text is overlaid on this background.

# Hermeneutics

The approach one takes when studying a text.

## **Our Text:**

BIBLE

A collection of small books grouped into two large books

# Hermeneutics

The approach one takes when studying a text.

## **Our Text:**

First collection – all written before Alexander

Second collection – all written after Rome

# Hermeneutics

The approach one takes when studying a text.

## **Our Text:**

First collection – all written before Alexander

“Old” – “Scripture” of “New” – Jewish

Two languages: Hebrew & Aramaic

Second collection – all written after Rome

“New” – Jewish Christian writings

One language: Koine Greek

# Hermeneutics

The approach one takes when studying a text.

Our Text:

Autographs – do not exist

Manuscripts – do exist but from various times

(what translators use to produce English versions)

# Hermeneutics

The approach one takes when studying a text.

Two approaches:

Younger – Source-critical

Older – Historical-grammatical



# Hermeneutics

The approach one takes when studying a text.

Two approaches:

Younger – Source-critical

Seeks to deconstruct the text back to original

Works primarily with supposition & speculation

Older – Historical-grammatical

Skeptical study of text and context

Works primarily in what exists

# Hermeneutics

The approach one takes when studying a text.

## PROBLEM:

Many scholars do not keep clear what approach they use

Evidence vs Interpretation

What we are about to do is to study an interpretation (translation) of the text

# Preparation

## **LITERAL TRANSLATION** (word-for-word)

New King James Version, New American Standard Bible, New Revised Standard Version

## **DYNAMIC EQUIVALENT TRANSLATION** (thought-for-thought)

New International Version, Revised English Bible

## **FREE TRANSLATION** (paraphrase)

The Living Bible, The Message, The Good News Bible, The Clear Word

# Preparation

## INTENTIONAL AMBIANCE

Avoid distractions

Comfortable without too much comfort

Soft music

Good temperature

Good lighting

All of your materials at hand

# Preparation

**FIRST STEP:** Open the Prayer

Pray for humility

Pray for discernment

**SECOND STEP:** Study

Study the text with prayer

**THIRD STEP:** Close the Prayer

1 Thessalonians 5:17 “Pray without ceasing”

# Preparation

- Literal Translation (or original)
- Environment
- Prayer
- Notebook and Pencil (or laptop)

# Recognizing Genre

Identify genre ancient writer used to convey spiritual message

**Today:** Narrative, Poetry

Next Time: Apocalyptic, Parable, Chronological, Letters, Law

PURPOSE of BIBLE = **Redemption** through forming a relationship with **GOD**

# Narrative Genre

Stories with spiritual messages

Written NOT to entertain or record history  
(although may do both)

Written to TEACH a spiritual lesson  
(that could be easily remembered)



# Pericope

## **Definition:**

A passage selected for study with a clear beginning and clear ending that contains a spiritual message in a particular genre

Evidence of Divine origin (genius)

Spend weeks in one pericope

# Key Words

## **Narrative Strategy - Key Words:**

Important words in a passage that unlock spiritual messages

ex. YHWH, Messiah, righteousness, fear, etc.

ex. and, but, then, now, to, on, etc.

# The NAME of God

“God” = what He is (indicates authority)

“YHWH” = His name (indicates relationship)

In text as:

**the LORD** (as opposed to Lord or lord)

**GOD** (as opposed to God or god)

# Genesis 1,2

1:28 Then **God** blessed them, and **God** said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

2:7 And **the LORD God** formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

# Exodus 3,4

3:4 So when **the LORD** saw that he turned aside to look, **God** called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!"

3:7 And **the LORD** said,...

3:11 But Moses said to **God**,...

# Exodus 3,4

3:13 Then Moses said to **God**,...What is His name?...

3:14 And **God** said to Moses, “**I AM WHO I AM.**”

4:1-9 = signs that **the LORD** is with Moses

4:10 Then Moses said to **the LORD**, "O my **Lord**,..."

# Ezekiel

3:11 "And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says **the Lord GOD**,' whether they hear, or whether they refuse."

# Repeating Words

## **Narrative Strategy - Repeating Words:**

Words that repeat in a pericope and thus designate where the spiritual message is

Try to figure out what is common

Try to work out what is different



# Exodus 1

REPEATING WORD = “multiplied”

1:7 - after death of patriarchs

1:12 - after affliction of slavery

1:20 - after command to kill the boys

# Movement of Characters

## **Narrative Strategy - Characters:**

The movement of characters in time and/or space that teaches a spiritual message

God is always the main character

How He is redeeming, Who is being redeemed, etc

# Poetry Genre

## **English Poem (rhymes sounds):**

Roses are red, Violets are blue;

Sugar is sweet, so what's wrong with you?

## **Hebrew Poem (rhymes thoughts):**

Roses are red, Blue is the color of Violets;

Sugar is sweet, You're love is a like Bitter  
Melon.

# Poetry

Look for COMPARISON of IDEAS

Look for CONTRAST of IDEAS

The spiritual message lies in this examination!

# Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like **scarlet**, They shall be as **white as snow**; Though they are **red like crimson**, They shall be as **wool**."

# Proverbs 9:10

"The **fear of the LORD** is the **beginning of wisdom**, And the **knowledge of the Holy One** is **understanding**.

# HOMework

Ask questions of the text and then search for answers in both of these genres

## NARRATIVE:

John 3:1-21 (Jesus does not answer his questions. Why? Or does He?)

(What does 3:11-21 have to do with 3:2-10?)

## POETIC:

Genesis 2:23,24 (What is being compared or contrasted in verse 23 and why?)

(In context where one flesh became two, how are we to understand two becoming one flesh using poetic genre? – remember to rhyme thoughts)

**GOD BLESS YOU**

