

The Hermeneutic of Jesus

(Psalm 119:105)

- Introduction:
1. Have you ever had a disagreement over what the Bible teaches and had someone say, “That’s just your interpretation?”
 2. Many people have an approach to Bible study that basically affirms we can’t ever be sure of a proper understanding of the Bible.
 3. (2 Timothy 3:7) “Ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.”
 4. Yet, Jesus said, that we can know the truth (John 8:32).
 5. Since Jesus was God in the flesh (John 1:14), and since he never sinned (Hebrews 4:15), would he be a safe guide to follow?
 6. In this lesson, we will examine a few hermeneutical or interpretive principles that Jesus employed in his handling of Scripture.

I. Jesus Respected the Authority of Scripture

- A. (Matthew 12:3,5) Have you not read?
- B. (Matthew 19:4) Have you not read?
- C. (Matthew 22:29,31) Have you not read?
- D. (Luke 16:29) They have Moses and the prophets.
- E. (Luke 4:4,8,12) It is written.
- F. When confronted with questions and controversy, Jesus appealed to the Scriptures, affirming his belief in their authority.
- G. What do the Scriptures say, not “what do we feel” is how Jesus sought to answer biblical questions (Proverbs 14:12; Romans 4:3).

II. Jesus Did Not View Tradition as Authoritative

- A. Today, the largest religious denomination in the world views tradition on an equal plane with Scripture.
- B. However, Jesus condemned those who lifted tradition to a place of authority and refused to allow tradition rule his life.
- C. (Matthew 15:8-9) Teach as doctrine the commandments of men.
- D. Consider how many times Jesus healed on the Sabbath in violation of the “traditions of the fathers” (Mark 1:21-28; Matt. 8:14-15; Matt. 12:9-13; John 5:1-18; Luke 13:10-17; Luke 14:1-6; John 9:1-7,14).
- E. (Mark 7:1-13) Jesus condemned the Pharisees for honoring tradition over God’s word.
 1. Consider how many divisions, or at least conflicts, that have occurred because people don’t follow Jesus’ interpretive approach to tradition.
 2. Ex. – Posture in prayer, dress in worship, one cup/many cups, new/old songs, Bible translations, worship times, use of terms etc.

III. Jesus Recognized Authority in Implication

- A. Many among us today reject as binding and authoritative, any biblical position that was arrived at through the use of human reasoning or implication.
- B. In other words, some insist that if a position is to be taught as binding and authoritative, it must be explicitly stated.
 - 1. However, who are we to tell God how he is permitted communicate truth to us?
 - 2. Can God not choose to speak to us explicitly as well as implicitly?
 - 3. Furthermore, to suggest that no doctrine is authoritative if it is derived through implication, negates the entire Bible!
 - 4. Since your name and my name is not mentioned in Scripture, don't we use implication to determine that what God said to others also applies to you and me?
- C. (Ills. Thomas Campbell and the Declaration and Address).
- D. However, did not hold such a hermeneutical approach. He freely used implicit as well as explicit truths to teach God's word.
- E. Consider (Matthew 22:23-33).
 - 1. The Sadducees were bantering with Jesus and ridiculing the concept of life after death.
 - 2. Jesus set out to expose their error and affirm there is life after death.
 - 3. But how did he do it?
 - a. First, he appealed to the authority of Scripture (Matthew 22:29).
 - b. Next, he employed implication.
 - 1) Premise: God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 - 2) Premise: But God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.
 - 3) Conclusion: Therefore Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive.
 - c. Jesus could have explicitly stated, "There is life after death," but he chose instead to implicitly teach the same truth.
 - d. Furthermore, that truth that was reached through implication is not any less authoritative than if Jesus had explicitly stated it.
- F. If I were to "explicitly" state that one side of a square is four inches long, think of all the other things you could know about that square without being explicitly stated. Those implicit truths are not questionable but are every bit as solid and true as the explicit statement.

IV. Jesus Viewed the "Silence of the Scriptures" as Prohibitive

- A. When I use the expression, "The Silence of the Scriptures," I do so accommodatively.
 - 1. Technically, the question is how we understand what was spoken, not what was not spoken.

- B. But the question is, “Is God’s silence on a matter permissive or prohibitive?”
 1. Ex. Since God was “silent” on infant baptism, does that silence give us permission to baptize infants, or is his silence to be understood as prohibitive?
 2. Ex. Since God was “silent” about praying to Mary, does that silence give us permission to pray to Mary, or is his silence to be understood as prohibitive?
 - C. Let’s consider how Jesus addressed this question.
 1. (Matthew 19:3-6).
 - a. The Pharisees asked Jesus if it was permissible to divorce for any reason.
 - b. Jesus response to that question was to quote a positive affirmation of what marriage is. In other words, In answer to the question, Jesus affirmed what God said.
 - c. In light of what was affirmed, Jesus said, “THEREFORE” a man shall not divorce his wife.
 - d. In other words, Jesus said, “In the beginning, God authorized marriage and was silent about divorce, therefore, don’t do it.”
 - e. Silence about the matter amounted to having no authority!
 2. (John 8:1-20).
 - a. The law affirmed that when two are caught committing adultery, both to be put to death.
 - b. In this case, they only brought the guilty woman.
 - c. The law was silent concerning the situation when only one was brought to be executed.
 - d. Jesus didn’t think that silence authorized them to put the guilty woman to death. Rather he informed her to go and sin no more.
- Conclusion:
1. Jesus not only showed us how to live morally and ethically, but he taught us how to interpret and apply the Scriptures.
 2. While this outline is not exhaustive, it does provide us with several principles Jesus observed in his handling of the Scriptures.