

Lesson Seven:

Hermeneutics and Its Related Terms Defined

Many people are apprehensive to begin a study of hermeneutics just because they do not understand the term. Since it is neither found in Scripture nor commonly used in their daily lives, they do not see why they should devote time and energy considering it. Yet, when the serious Bible student comes to understand not only the term but also the concept it describes he then desires to familiarize himself with it.

The term "hermeneutics" has an interesting etymology. It has its basis in Greek mythology. It is derived from "Hermes," the Greek messenger of the gods and the interpreter of Jupiter.

Hermeneutics Defined

1. "The science of interpretation." (D.R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics*, p. 1)
2. "The study of the methodological principles of interpretation (as of the Bible.)" (*Webster's New Seventh Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 389)
3. "The science and art of Biblical interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill and not by mechanical imitation." (Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 1)
4. "Sacred hermeneutics is the science of interpreting the Scriptures." (Dungan, 1)

Related Terms Defined

Interpret. "To explain or tell the meaning of: ELUCIDATE." (*Webster's*, 443)

Interpretation. "Is a generic term and may refer to any work of literature. Referred specifically to the sacred Scriptures, the science of interpretation is generally known as hermeneutics, while the practical application of the principles of this science is exegesis." (*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. III, p. 1489)

Exegesis. "(from *ex*, out, and *egeisthas*, to guide or lead), means to lead out. It is the application of the principles of hermeneutics in bringing out the meaning of any writing which might otherwise be difficult to understand." (Dungan, 1)

The relation of hermeneutics to exegesis. "Whereas hermeneutics seeks to establish the ruling principles of biblical interpretation, exegesis seeks to fix the meaning of individual statements and passages." (*Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 204-205)

Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Who was Hermes?
2. How is hermeneutics a science?
3. How is hermeneutics an art?
4. Define "interpret."
5. In relation to the Bible, what does interpretation mean?
6. What is exegesis?
7. How does exegesis complement hermeneutics?
8. How does exegesis differ from hermeneutics?