

Understanding Scripture

with Matthew as our guide

January 2018

Week 1: Understanding the Narratives

Week 2: Recognizing the Literary Devices

Week 3: Understanding the Teachings

Week 4: Appreciating the Prophecies

Recommended Reads:

- Sproul, R.C. *Knowing Scripture, Revised Edition*. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2009.
- Duval, J. Scott and J. Daniel Hays. *Journey Into God's Word*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.
- Plummer, Robert. *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010.

Week 2: Recognizing the Literary Devices

Matt 13:16 – Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears for they hear.

1. Recognize the poetry
 - a. Poetry is usually marked by indentation in modern translations (not KJV).
 - b. Expected word order is often changed for emphasis (Matt 5:3-10)
 - i. “Blessed are the poor” instead of “the poor in spirit are blessed”- Reversed word order makes the beatitudes more memorable.
 - ii. (6:21) “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
 - iii. (6:34) “Sufficient for the day is its own trouble”.
 - c. Poetry often has parallelism (repeating the same idea with different words)
 - i. Three types of parallelism:

1. Synonymous: restates the same concept differently (6:10)
 2. Antithetical parallelism: states opposing concepts (6:19-20)
 3. Synthetic (or step) parallelism: escalates the concept often narrowing its focus in subsequent verses. (5:21-22)
 - ii. Notice the parallelism of the beatitudes (5:3-11). What kind is it?
- d. Chiasms abound in biblical poetry
- i. Mirror imaged concepts forming a series of two or more elements followed by another series of parallel elements in reverse order.
 - ii. Notice the chiasm in 13:15 (heart->ears->eyes->eyes->ears->heart)
2. Recognize the figures of speech
- a. Jesus majored in hyperbole (exaggeration) to gain attention
 - i. (5:29-30) If your eye/hand causes you to sin tear it out/cut it off.
 - ii. (6:3) Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.
 - b. Jesus used synecdoche (a small part that represents the whole).
 - i. (6:11) Give us this day our daily bread (representing all needs).
 - ii. (6:19) Moth and rust represent all forms of destructive force
 - c. Jesus used simile and metaphor to help make abstract concepts clear.
 - i. (5:13-14) Metaphor-you are the salt of the earth/light of the world
 - ii. (7:24) Simile (“like” or “as”)-Everyone who hears will be like...
3. Look for poetic devices and figures of speech in the following passages:
- a. Matthew 7:1-14-Look for parallelism, unusual word order, exaggeration, metaphor and synecdoche.
 - b. Matthew 13:24-51. Jesus often claims his parables are similes for the “kingdom of heaven.” For next class, study the ones in this passage and try to determine what they tell us about the kingdom of heaven.