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HERM007	a Grace Notes course

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Hermeneutics

Source Materials:

“Hermeneutics: the Science and Art of Biblical Interpretation”

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“A Syllabus of Studies in Hermeneutics”, Rollin Thomas Chafer

HERM007

adapted for Grace Notes training by Warren Doud

Grace Notes

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Lesson 11 - Types, Symbols And Parables

Introduction

There is a clear cut justification for typology even though the critics claim it is *forced* exegesis or interpretation. Typology shows the relationship of the Old Testament with the New Testament. The prophetic elements of Scripture may be verbally predictive or the future may be displayed in types.

Typological interpretation is based on unity of the two Testaments. The Lord's use of Old Testament invites us to find Him in the pages of the ancient Scriptures.

There is a distinct vocabulary found in the New Testament that references the Old Testament. The Greek word HUPODEIGMA means that which is shown privately as an example or pattern. TUPOS is an impression that is left from the blow of a hammer. SKIA is a shadow or the outline cast by a real object. PARABOL8 means to place side-by-side as a comparison.

An EIKWN refers to an image like found on a coin. An ANTITUPON is a counterpart like an echo. An ALL8GOREW is the speaking of another thing (only in Gal 4:24).

Schools Of Typological Interpretation

The early church fathers sought to strengthen New Testament truth and they used types from the Old Testament. Many claim they were guilty of too much typology. Still others believed that all typology is forced interpretation and hence they believed there was no typology.

Some, such as Bishop Marsh, believed that one could only consider something as a type if it was designated as a type in the New Testament.

The Moderate School of interpretation though believed that both innate and inferred types existed. Solomon Glassius led this school. He defined the "innate" types as though that were specifically declared as such in the New Testament and the inferred types as those that were justified by the nature of the New Testament.

An Evaluation Of The Methods

Bishop Marsh's view becomes too limited, as it is mechanical and artificial. This is the "safest" route to pursue but as one studies the richness of Scripture it becomes apparent that not everything must be specifically declared to be a type for it to exist.

The school that believed there were no types came from a reaction to the allegorists and to liberals, who wanted to give everything a "deeper" meaning.

The Book of Hebrews, while explaining many types only points out a small part of the significance. If the whole is a type then so are its parts. When the writer of Hebrews points to the earthly Tabernacle being a type in chapter 9:23-25, or the Law being a "shadow" in 10:1, he is clearly inferring that the parts have significance as well. Too much typology can be avoided by diligent and careful study of the Scriptures under the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Typological interpretation differs greatly from allegorical interpretation in that Allegorical interpretation introduces something foreign into the meaning, whereas Typological interpretation has limits that are set by the nature of the type.

The Nature And Interpretation Of Types

The interpretation of a type depends on the nature of the type. A type is a preordained representative relationship that certain persons, events and institutions of the Old Testament bear to corresponding persons, events and institutions in the New Testament. There must be a genuine resemblance in form or idea between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The resemblance must either be designated innately or have a clear inference. Dissimilarity is to be expected, but the truth is found at the point of similarity. One must determine how the New Testament treats the subject.

Types are inherently prophetic by their very nature as they point to the reality. Some of the

mistakes of the Christian Allegorists could have been avoided had they not gone beyond simple common sense. An important principle is to not attempt to prove any doctrine or position from types unless there is clear New Testament authority. Types are illustrations of what would come.

There are several different kinds of types. Types of Persons would include such people as Adam because Jesus Christ is called the "last Adam (1 Cor 15:45)." Institutional Types would include the Sacrifices, Feasts, and Promised Land. Types concerning Offices would include Moses as the Lawgiver and Prophet, Aaron as a type of the High Priest and Melchizedek as a picture of the new priesthood of Jesus Christ. Events such as the Crossing of the Red Sea and the Wilderness Wanderings are pictures for us to learn from (1 Cor 10:6). Actions can also be types such as the lifting up of brazen serpent (Nu 21:9 cf. John 3:14) and Things such as the Tabernacle (Heb 9:23-25).

The Interpretation Of Symbols

A symbol may represent a thing either past, present or future whereas a type inherently represents the future. A symbol has no inherent reference to time, but it often can be determined by the context. The names of symbols have to be understood literally first. Symbols always denote something essentially different from themselves and yet some resemblance must be traceable.

There are two elements in a symbol, the mental image it represents and the image that represents it. Numerals, metals and colors may all be symbols, depending on the context in which they are found. While all of these may have significance within the scope of a study of the Tabernacle or Temple, they probably have no significance if they are found in an undesignated type. For example, the gold used in the Tabernacle represents Deity, but the gold that used as a medium of exchange in a simple historical transaction would probably have no such significance.

Symbols are usually explained somewhere in Scripture, so uninterpreted symbols need to be approached with caution. The approach is the same as for the interpretation of types. Special consideration must also be given to the context. Cross-references need to be diligently checked. The nature of the symbol must be considered, such as the "Lion" of the Tribe of Judah. There will be similarities and dissimilarities. Truth is found in the similarities.

We must be especially careful of reading meanings from our culture into the symbols. If the symbol is in a prophetic context, then the symbol may indeed be referring to something from that prophetic culture, but again, caution must be exercised and doctrine must not be built on the interpretation of symbols. Doctrines should be built on hard evidence from the Word of God and not from the opinions of man.

In the study of symbols we should be aware of "Double Imagery," where a symbol has more than one meaning. Jesus Christ is a "Lion" (Rev 5:5) and Satan is "like a lion" (1 Pet 5:8). We must guide ourselves by the General Principles of Interpretation. One entity may be represented by more than one symbol as is evident in the many symbols that are used to describe the Lord Jesus Christ, such as the "Lion" of the Tribe of Judah of Revelation 5:5 and the "Bright Morning Star" of Revelation 22:16.

We should also recognize that there is some symbolism in numbers, but this is easily abused. Let General Hermeneutics again be the guide.

Realize that each symbol has only one significant meaning and always has the same fundamental meaning.

The symbols represented in Scripture are a basis for further studies.

The Interpretation Of Parables

A Parable is a narrative that is constructed for the sake of conveying important truth. It is

inherently figurative language that draws an illustration from life to teach spiritual truth.

When studying parables we should seek to determine the central truth of the parable. Part of doing this is to look for contextual clues to help in the interpretation, namely, look to see if the Lord states the central principle that He wanted to communicate and then uses a parable to illustrate the principle. We should also look carefully to determine how much of the parable Christ interpreted Himself, separating the essential from what is only attendant to the theme.

We also note the time period for which the Lord designed the parable. Parables should not be made the primary or sole source for a doctrine. There should be a solid backing from elsewhere in Scripture.

Figurative Language (Rollin Chafer)

The literature of all lands and tongues abounds in figurative language. The Scriptures are no exception to this universal fact. In this connection Cell  rier says: "It should be remembered, however, that this is no concession to those who deny the inspiration of the Word, since a figure or parable may be just as much inspired as a rigid syllogism."¹ Our Lord's speech was replete with all kinds of figures, including under tropical words and phrases, *metaphorical* (Ex. "I am the true vine."), *synecdochical* (Ex. "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup."), *metonymical* (Ex. "If I wash thee not," etc.) expressions; as well as the various forms of allegories, as parables, types and symbols. The various tropes are easily recognizable as figures, and the meaning is generally clear from the context.

In determining whether a word is tropical or literal Lockhart says: "It is usually sufficient to inquire in any case of doubt, Does the literal make good sense? If the literal proves to be

¹ *Man. D'Hermen.*, p. 142.

absurd, or in any way *inconsistent*, either with other parts of the sentence or with the nature of the things discussed, we may conclude with tolerable certainty that the language is figurative." On the other hand, he points out that it is important to look for a literal meaning before accepting one that is figurative. "Many interpreters have understood Zion to be a figure, and the Christian church to be really meant. This is purely a surmise, as the Psalm makes no allusion to a future development, nor to any characteristics of the church that would not better apply to the literal city of Jerusalem. This Psalm is a fine hymn of praise to the sacred capital of the Jewish nation; and a figurative view robs the piece of its beautiful patriotism."²

These reasons for not taking the word as figurative are valid, but they are buttressed with other teachings of the Scriptures which make it very clear that Zion is always connected with Jerusalem in meaning. As Dr. Scofield says: "Zion and Jerusalem mean Zion and Jerusalem, not the church. The church is not in prophecy at all. His (Christ's) purpose to form a church during His rejection by Israel is never disclosed until announced by Jesus Himself" (Matt 16:18; Eph 3:3-10).³

Interpretation of Allegories: "The great rule of interpretation of allegories is to ascertain the scope of the allegory either by reference to the context or to parallel passages; and to seize, the main truth which it is intended to set forth, interpreting, all accessories in harmony with the central truth."⁴ In the study of allegories of various kinds, namely, parables, types and symbols, the interpreter must be careful not to treat plain statements of Scripture as is

² *Principles of Inter.*, pp. 157 and 159.

³ *Corres. Course*, Vol. I, p. 128.

⁴ *Cyclo. Handbook of the Bible*, p. 224.

demanding of language couched in figurative expressions.

There is all the difference possible in interpreting a Scripture allegory, on the one hand, and the allegorizing of a plain Scripture on the other hand. Although the latter violates the rules of sound hermeneutics by changing the plain intent of the author, this system is defended by those who have to resort to it to make plausible the creedal tenets they hold. The defenders of the postmillennial and amillennial systems openly espouse the allegorizing of plain Scriptures to meet the needs of their systems of interpretation, a fair example being Wyngaarden's rather recent work, *The Future of the Kingdom and Fulfillment*.

Single Sense of Figurative Language: The literal sense of the words employed in a figure of speech is not to be taken as the meaning of the figure, but rather the sense intended by the use of the figure. In all such instances, therefore, there is but one meaning. In such cases the literal is not the sense. In this connection Cellérier says: "Revelation has been clothed with popular forms strongly impressed with the habits of the East, that is to say, with metaphorical, poetical, and parabolic forms, which convey a meaning different from that of the literal sense of the words. But even then there are not two senses, the literal and metaphorical. The metaphorical is alone the real sense; the literal does not exist as a sense; it is only the vehicle of the former; it contains in itself no result, no truth. There is therefore only one true sense."⁵

Parable - "A short fictitious narrative from which a moral or spiritual truth is drawn; as, the *parables* of Christ" (Webster).

The Lord used parables constantly in his teaching. Several classified lists of these parables have been published. Few of such

⁵ *Man. D'Hermen.*, p. 41.

classified lists have met with general agreement by interpreters. Perhaps the most profitable exercise would be for the student to make up his own classified list, proceeding under the laws of hermeneutics in the task. One parable only, that of the two sons, will be analyzed in class as an example for such interpretation. Analysis given orally.

As a result of this analysis the professor offers the following caution: In the use of the parables spoken by the Lord before the cross, clearly applicable under pre-Cross conditions, the following rules should be kept in mind to safeguard the teaching from confusing applications: (1) Keep the application true to the principles of grace. Avoid any compromise with the idea of human merit in a sinner's approach to God. (2) Keep the teaching true to the terms of the gospel. Avoid applications which are confusing on the point of faith, and not works, required for salvation. (3) Keep the applications true to the principles governing the walk of the believer in the Spirit.

Consistently following these rules will save one's ministry from bringing confusion into the minds of inquirers. The unsaved have problems enough without the introduction of needless ones under our ministry.

Types - "As an Allegory is a double representation in *words*, a Type is a double representation in *action*; the literal being intended and planned to represent the spiritual" (Angus-Green). Many of the best interpreters do not recognize as a type any allegory unless specifically used as such in the Scriptures. The story of Joseph and his brethren is a beautiful illustration of many phases of the Lord Jesus' life and his church, but it is not mentioned as a type.

"A type may be (a) A person (Ex. Adam-Christ, Rom 5:14); (b) An event (Ex. the events of Exodus (1 Cor 10:11, mar.); (c) A thing (Temple veil-human body of Christ, Heb 10:20); (d) An institution (Ex. Jewish high-priesthood-high-priesthood of Christ); (e) A ceremonial (Ex.

Passover-sacrifice of Christ, 1 Cor 5:7). Types occur most frequently in the Pentateuch, but are found, more sparingly, elsewhere. The antitype, or fulfillment of the type, is found, usually, in the New Testament.

Interpretation: A type must never be used to teach a doctrine, but only to illustrate a doctrine elsewhere explicitly taught (Ex. John 3:14-1 Cor 5:7).⁶

Symbols- "Other outward representations of spiritual truths are *Symbols*. Generally speaking, the Type is prefigurative, the Symbol illustrative of what already exists (Ex. of Symbols: Bread and wine served at the Lord's Supper-His body and blood).⁷

Kinds of Symbols

- (1) Miraculous. (Examples: Pillar of fire-cloud; burning lamp and smoking furnace, symbolizing God's presence).
- (2) Materials. (Examples: Articles of furniture in the tabernacle).
- (3) Visional. (Examples: The highly figurative vision of John descriptive of the person and offices of Christ in Revelation 1). Visional symbols are the most numerous amongst the various kinds of symbols.

Symbolical numbers. Principal items.

- (1) One-Deity, unity, one God, etc.
- (2) Three-Triune God, tripartite nature of man, etc.
- (3) Four-World number: four winds, four corners of the earth, etc.
- (4) Six-Fullness of evil-trebled, the number of superman beast, 666.
- (5) Seven-Completeness: perfection in the sense of completeness; covenant and dispensational number.

⁶ Scofield *Corres. Course*, p. 44f.

⁷ Angus-Green *Cyclo. Handbook of the Bible*, p. 221.

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- (6) Ten-Rounded fullness; fullness of human responsibility, etc.
- (7) Twelve-Rule of God, twelve tribes, twelve thrones, etc.
- (8) Forty-Testing: flood, fasting of Moses, Elijah and Christ, etc.
- (9) Seventy-Prophetic number: rounded fullness, three score and ten years, seventy years of captivity, seventy times seven, seventy elders, etc.
- (10) Time symbols-Time (year), times (two years), half time (half year); three and a half years-42 months-1260 days.

Symbolical colors

Blue, heavenly; purple, royalty; scarlet, sacrifice; white, purity; black, sin, death; red, blood, war.

Symbolical metals

Gold, deity; silver, redemption; brass, judgment; iron, strength; clay, instability.

Language of Accommodation (Rollin Chafer)

Accommodation (or condescension) is the theological principle that God, while being in his nature unknowable and unreachable, has nevertheless communicated with humanity in a way which humans can understand and respond to. The concept is that scripture has accommodated, or made allowance for, the original audience's language and general level of understanding. [Wikipedia]

There is a true and a false application of accommodation. Without question the Scriptures contain evidences of accommodation. As we shall see, as presented in another paragraph, Revelation itself is in a sense an accommodation. Finding evidences of true accommodation in the Scriptures, German writers developed a false application of the principle of accommodation. Of this movement Terry says: "A method of exposition, which owes its distinction to the celebrated J. S. Semler, the father of the destructive school of

German Rationalism, is known as the Accommodation Theory. According to this theory the Scripture teachings respecting Miracles, vicarious and expiatory sacrifice, the resurrection, eternal judgment, and the existence of angels and demons, are to be regarded as an accommodation to the superstitious notions, prejudices, and ignorance of the time. The supernatural was thus set aside."⁸

After reviewing the effects of such methods as applied to the N.T., Cell erier says: "If by accommodation, in this connection, is meant that Christ and His apostles accommodated themselves to the ignorance and the prejudice of the Jews, we reject it as derogatory to the character of our Lord, and to that of the sacred writers of the N.T. Infidelity itself has not impeached the rectitude and purity of the Savior. His life has always been reckoned the embodiment of absolute perfection. No one, after a careful perusal of the N.T. can point to any compromise between truth and error."⁹

The destructive critics and all modernists of our own days who reject the authority of the Scriptures join in the chorus that the Lord Jesus employed the thought forms of the first century although, as they claim, He knew them to be untrue. If this is true, He was the greatest impostor of History. We may, however, dismiss such theories of accommodation and lay the cause of imposture at His detractors' doors. Such false theories of accommodation affect the matter or substance of revelation.

That there is a true form of accommodation which has to do with the forms of language employed to express the divine thought we cannot doubt. Sweet, in his article on Accommodation in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, says: "The Bible teaches that in the height and depth of His being God is

⁸ *Biblical Hermeneutics*, Intro., p. 62.

⁹ *Man. D'Hermen.*, p. 274.

unsearchable. His mind and the human mind are *quantitatively* incommensurable. Man cannot by searching find out God. His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. But, the Bible affirms with equal emphasis the essential *qualitative* kinship of the divine and human constitutions. God is spirit and man is spirit also. Man is made in the image of God and is made to know God.”

These two principles affirm the necessity and possibility of Revelation. God’s thoughts may become ours through divine accommodation. He can thus utter them in forms that are suited to our capacity to receive them.

There are two prominent classes of examples of this method of accommodation, pointed out by Lockhart:¹⁰

(1) Anthropomorphism. Example: “I will put thee in a cleft of a rock, and will cover thee with my hand until I have passed by: and I will take away my hand and thou shalt see my back; but my face shall not be seen.” (Exod 33:22, 23). Such examples can be multiplied many times throughout the Bible, and such forms of expression which are foreign to God’s being are deliberately used as accommodations to man’s modes of thought to make God’s meaning plain.

(2) Anthropopathism. This has to do with the ascription of the passions and emotions of man to God. This is as necessary as the ascription of the members of the human body to God under the anthropomorphic figures. Example: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great fury.” (Zech 8:2). Israel’s idolatry brought out this strong statement, the meaning of which could not be dodged.

Practically all the tropical language of the Scriptures is accommodation to man’s ability to catch the ideas intended to be transmitted, but

we have not the space to mention other classifications.

In general one hermeneut has summed it up as follows: Wrong methods of Accommodation seek to foist on the Scriptures ideas foreign to the intent of the sacred writers, while the true method seeks the elucidation of the truth.

Exercises for HERM007

1. Why do we recognize Typological interpretation?
2. Consider the different schools of interpretation of types and tell why you would hold the position you do.
3. What is at the core of the interpretation of types?
4. Even though types are inherently prophetic by their very nature, what must we be careful of?
5. List and consider the different kinds of types.
6. Explain the difference between types and symbols.
7. What are the two main elements of a symbol?
8. Explain the importance of culture on the interpretation of symbols.
9. Explain what is meant by "double imagery."
10. What is a parable designed to do?
11. What is the main thing we are to look for in parables?
12. What cautions would you give to those interpreting parables?

¹⁰ *Principles of Interpretation*, p. 182.