

STUDY GUIDE

for

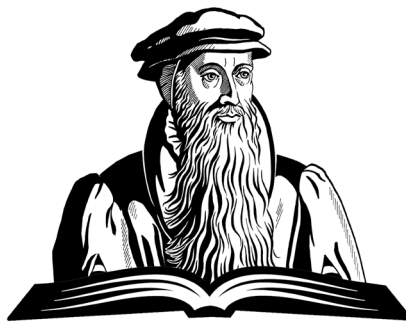
HERMENEUTICS

*Principles of
Scriptural Interpretation*

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

Lecture 3

SENSE



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

John Knox Institute of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

© 2023 by John Knox Institute of Higher Education

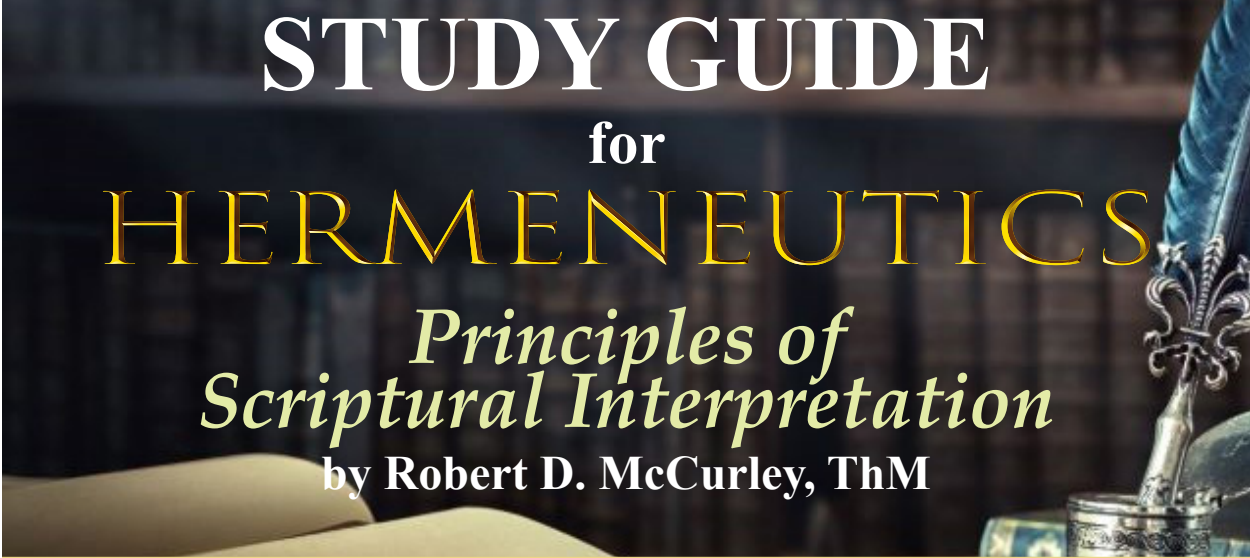
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means for profit, except in brief quotations for the purposes of review, comment, or scholarship, without written permission from the publisher, John Knox Institute, P.O. Box 19398, Kalamazoo, MI 49019-19398, USA.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

Visit our website: www.johnknoxinstitute.org

Rev. Robert D. McCurley is minister of the Gospel at Greenville Presbyterian Church, in Taylors, South Carolina, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Presbytery of the United States of America.

greenvillepresbyterian.com

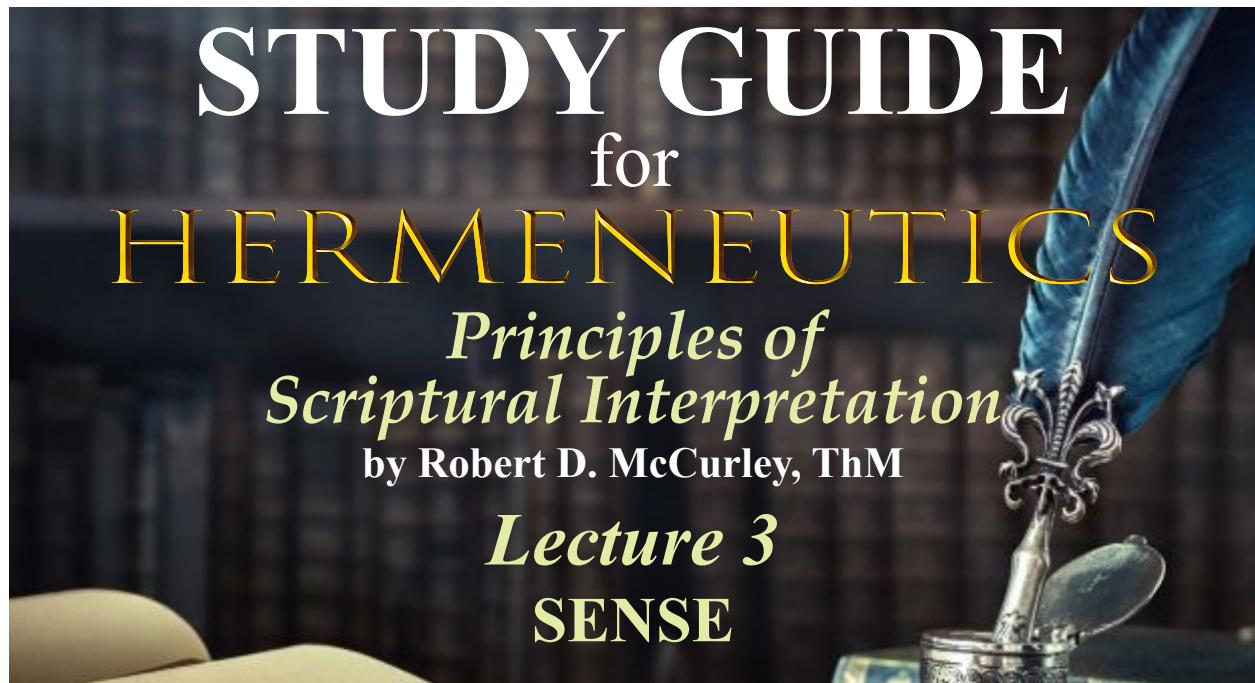


STUDY GUIDE for HERMENEUTICS

Principles of Scriptural Interpretation

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

1. Introduction
2. Foundation
3. Sense
4. Comparing
5. Context
6. Words
7. History
8. Genre
9. Christ
10. Exposition



Scripture Text

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”—2 Peter 1, verses 20 and 21

“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”—Nehemiah 8, verse 8

Key Points

1. The Bible is God’s revelation to man. In 2 Peter 1:20–21, Peter warned that men must not make their private views to be the meaning of Scripture. God is the best interpreter.
2. The First Principle: *There is only one meaning in any given passage of Scripture.*
 - a. The veracity of God necessitates this; God cannot give mixed or misleading messages.
 - b. The unity of God’s truth and the clarity of Scripture require a Single Sense.
 - c. The nature of human language necessitates a Single Sense.
3. Clarifying a common misconception: the connection between a complex meaning and the principle of the Single Sense of a passage.
 - a. Some Old Testament prophecies have several steps of fulfillment.
 - b. Some passages contain typology, where one thing is a type, symbol, or picture of another thing.
 - c. The knowledge of the human authors did not always exhaust the sense or meaning of the passage.

d. The Single Sense of Scripture is completely compatible with what we call “good and necessary consequences” that flow from what a passage says.

e. Although there is only one proper sense or meaning in any Scripture, there can be many applications drawn from a text.

4. There are dangers to guard against in interpreting Scriptures because there are many who twist Scripture. The One Sense of Scripture is a common point of divergence for heretical cults. We’ll consider a few examples.

a. Emanuel Swedenborg—he said the church destroyed the original meaning of Scripture.

b. Mary Baker Eddie (Jehovah’s Witnesses)—built a new religion, rejecting the Scriptures.

c. Karl Barth (neo-orthodoxy)—said the Word of God was contained in Scripture, not Scripture itself, and was based on subjective experience.

d. Popular today is the belief that a person can derive their own meaning of a text.

5. This first principle of only one true sense of any Scripture passage protects the believer from many errors in interpreting the Bible.

Review Questions

1. What was the Apostle Peter’s instruction to the church in 2 Peter 1, verses 20 and 21?

2. What is the first principle for rightly dividing the Word of God? What does it mean?

3. What are the three reasons that support this first principle?

4. How do some Old Testament prophecies have complex meanings? How does that still fit within the first principle of one sense to a passage?

5. Does the typology in the Old Testament mean that they have more than one meaning? Please give some examples.

6. How is it that some Old Testament prophecies had several steps of fulfillment? Even so, was there still one sense in the meaning of the passage?

7. Please give an example of how the Single Sense Principle is compatible with what we call “good and necessary consequences” that flow from what a passage says.

8. What applications can be drawn from Psalm 139:2? With these different applications, what is the relationship they have with the Single Sense meaning of the text?

9. How is the Single Sense Principle a common point of divergence between orthodox Christianity and heretical cults? What are some of the heretical cults that reject this principle?

10. Rev. McCurley says there's another error we often hear in Bible-believing evangelical churches today, when people say, "This is what this passage means to me." How are they rejecting the Single Sense Principle? What are they really saying?

Personal Applications

1. Now that you know this first principle of hermeneutics, can you see how it works to protect believers and churches from falling into many errors in Bible interpretation? How are you comforted to know about this?

2. Will you be using this Single Sense Principle as you read and study the Scriptures yourself? How do you think it will affect your Scripture meditations? Will you be more careful to only look for the one true meaning of the text?
