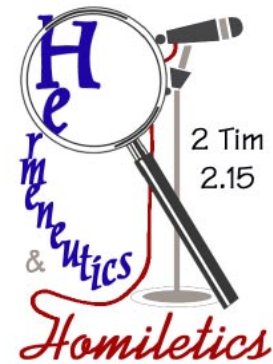


Polishing Our Hermeneutical Glasses

Section 8

Useful Terms for The Study of Hermeneutics



The following words or phrases are useful to know when studying hermeneutics or working on the exegesis of a passage. Some of these words are grammatical terms, some come from the disciplines of logic, philosophy or theology, and still others derive directly from the study of biblical texts and manuscripts. Remember: *the less precise your spiritual words are, the more religious you seem; the less ambiguous your terms, the more Christian you'll be deemed.*

Acronym

A word made up of the initial letters of other words.

Acrostic

A literary form in which beginning letters form a word or are arranged alphabetically.

Active Voice

Form of a verb expressing action by the subject rather than upon it.

Adjective

A class of words that describe or modify nouns.

Adverb

A class of words that describe or modify adverbs.

Agrapha (e.g., Acts 20.35)

An authentic saying of Jesus not recorded in any of the four gospels.

Allegory

A literary form in which items symbolize other more relevant realities.

Antanaclasis (e.g., Mat 8.22)

A play on words where the same word means two different things in the same statement.

Anthropomorphism

A description of God or an animal that implies human attributes.

Antithesis

The opposite idea to a given thesis (proposition).

Antithetical

Describing a contrasting parallelism.

Antitype (<i>Gk. antitypos</i>)	A biblical type that corresponds but does not necessarily finally fulfill an earlier type.
Apocalyptic	Having to do with the unveiling of Christ's glory, usually in the End Time.
Apocrypha	Non-canonical writings often in biblical literary styles, especially those in Catholic Bible.
Apodosis	"Then" (or result) clause of a conditional statement.
Aramaic	The language of Mesopotamia brought to Israel by the returning exiles.
Aramaism	A spelling or figure of speech derived from Aramaic origins.
Axiom, Axiomatic	Fact or idea taken for granted as self-evident or universally known.
Bluffer's Quotient	Ratio of biblical issues we have studied for ourself to issues for which we have an opinion.
Bulla, Bullae	Clay seal used to seal an ancient scroll.
Canonical	Recognized as part of an official corpus.
Chiasm, Chiastic	A literary form that repeats a series of words, images or ideas in reverse order. Named for its X-shaped structure, in which the main point of the passage appears at the center of the parallelisms.
Christophany	A manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ.
Clause	Part of a sentence containing a subject and predicate.
Colophon	The information at the end of an ancient document declaring title, authorship and sometimes ownership.
Concordance	An alphabetical index of all or part of the words in a specific literary work.
Conjunction	A part of speech that joins clauses or phrases.
Corpus	A literary "body" of works such as the Pauline Corpus consisting of all Paul's known epistles.
Cultural Context	The cultural environment from which a narrative or its subject or grammar emerges.
Cuneiform	Wedge-shaped writing of ancient Mesopotamia.

Dead Sea Scrolls	Religious scrolls discovered between 1947 and 1956 in caves near the Dead Sea.
Definite Article	The adjective “the” or its equivalents in other languages, as opposed to indefinite articles like “a.”
Demythologize	To divest a text of supernatural elements, usually in the belief that supernatural events don’t really happen.
Diachrony	Change over the course of time; the history of a term (cf. Synchrony).
Didactic	Having to do with or having the purpose of teaching or instructing.
<i>Ego Eimi</i>	Greek for “I AM” in the “I Am” statements of Christ, particularly in the Gospel of John.
Eisegesis	Literally, “reading meaning into” a text or narrative, i.e., interpreting subjectively
Epexegetical	Describing a statement in which a conjunction introduces a word or phrase that explains the preceding one.
Epigraphy	The study of inscriptions.
Eschatology	The study of last things, i.e., Bible prophecy about the future.
Exegesis	Drawing meaning out of a text, i.e., interpreting a passage for an audience.
Explicit	Unequivocally stated, leaving no room for interpretation or speculation.
Gender	In language, masculine, feminine or neuter, forms of nouns.
Genre	A literary classification such as poetry, narrative or apocalypse.
Gospel	“Good news,” a document or message about salvation, especially the biblical gospel.
Grammatical-Historical	An approach to exegesis based on the grammatical elements and historical context of the text.
<i>Hapax Legomenon</i>	Greek for “spoken once,” the phenomenon of a word or phrase occurring only once.
Hebraic	Having Hebrew characteristics, as in a Hebraic phrase.
Hebraism	A spelling or idiom derived from Hebrew.

Hendiadys	(Gk for one through two) A figure of speech that uses two different words joined by a conjunction to express multiple nuances of one idea.
Hermeneutic	A method of interpretation.
Hermeneutics	The science of interpretation, especially of biblical texts.
Hermeneutic of faith	A method of interpreting Scripture that emerges from Christian faith.
Historicity	The quality of a having actually occurred in history.
Holistic	Viewing something as a whole rather than focusing on parts or subcategories.
Identity (in logic)	The phenomenon of two elements being identical, i.e., the same thing or person.
Idiom	An expression peculiar to itself grammatically (often not to be understood literally) or to its culture of origin.
Implicit	Implied, leaving room for interpretation.
Inerrancy	The idea expressed in varying forms that Scripture does not err because it is divinely inspired.
Inference	A conclusion arrived at by a process of logical reasoning.
Interjection	A part of speech, usually an exclamation.
Lexicon	A dictionary translating from one language to another.
<i>Lingua franca</i>	The common language used by diverse cultures to do business, etc.
Linguistic Context	The grammatical and lexical context of a given word or statement.
Literal Sense	The face-value meaning of a text that does not require any “spiritualization” nor demythologizing.
Manuscript (MS)	A handwritten document.
<i>Mashal</i>	A proverb or wisdom saying involving comparisons or contrasts.
Messianic	Having to do with the promised Messiah, as in Messianic prophecy or Messianic Kingdom.
Metonymy	Substitution of one word for another, sometimes as a euphemism, sometimes to add color.

Millennialism	Belief in a thousand year reign of Christ on the earth.
Mishnah	Authoritative collection of rabbinical legal discussions codified in the late 2nd century A.D.
Mnemonic	Having to do with memory. A mnemonic device is an association made to help remember something.
Noun	A part of speech that names a person, place or thing.
Objective	Expressing or dealing with facts apart from personal interpretation.
Parable	A short memorable story told to teach a principle of moral truth.
Paradigm	A model or pattern for doing or understanding something. The law provided a paradigm for temple worship.
Paradigm Shift	A radical change in the model or principles for doing something.
Parallelism	A regular phenomenon in Hebrew poetry where couplets or triplets repeat, contrast or amplify the idea of the first line.
Part of Speech	The grammatical function of a word in a sentence.
Passive Voice	The form of a verb which indicates that the subject is affected by, rather than initiating, the action.
Pentateuch	The five-book corpus that begins the Holy Bible and is believed to have been compiled by Moses.
Pericope	A text cut out from, or considered apart from, its larger context.
Phenomenological	The kind of language that describes something as it is perceived, rather than as it is in its real essence.
Phrase	A combination of words that is less than a clause, and is typically built upon a verb or preposition.
Polysemy, Polysemous	Multiple meanings of a word; having multiple meanings.

Precedent	An earlier occurrence that provides the rationale for repeating an event or applying its underlying principle.
Preposition	A class of words that relate a noun to the rest of a sentence.
Progressive Revelation	The phenomenon of subsequent revelation supplementing and clarifying earlier revelation.
Pronoun	A class of words that substitute for nouns, often for more specific or proper nouns.
Prophetic Aorist Tense	A past tense, often used in prophetic pronouncements, declaring future events as though already accomplished.
Protasis	The “if” clause of a conditional statement.
Provenance	The place of origin, for example, the provenance of a biblical text.
Proverb	A short, pithy or memorable saying that communicates a principle or moral truth.
Pseudepigrapha	Documents written in the style of biblical texts, sometimes falsely under the name of a biblical character.
Qumran	The religious community near the Dead Sea that existed in the time of Christ and produced the Dead Sea Scrolls.
Rhetoric	Persuasive speech, or the formalized principles of speaking persuasively.
Semantics	The study of meaning in language.
Semantic Domain	The wide group of meanings that a word may convey, usually studied in conjunction with similar words.
Sentence	A grammatically complete unit of verbal communication typically having at least a subject and predicate.
Septuagint (LXX)	The Greek translation of the Old Testament and Apocrypha believed to have been completed around 200 BC.
Sillybos, Sillyboi	The labels, containing bibliographical information, attached to the edge of scrolls in antiquity.
Spiritualize	To give a mystical (and usually subjective) meaning, rather than a literal one, to a textual passage.

Subjective	Peculiar to the individual, a personal perspective rather than one shared by all.
<i>Summum bonum</i>	A person's "highest good," the thing valued above all else.
Syllogism	A logical argument consisting of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion.
Synchrony	How a term is currently used; current meaning of a term (see Diachrony).
Synecdoche	A figure of speech in which a part is used for the whole, or vice versa, as "50 head" for "50 cattle."
Synonymous	Describing a parallelism in which an idea is repeated in different words.
Synoptic Gospels	The three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, that relate Christ's life from a similar perspective.
Synoptic Problem	The problem of explaining the seeming discrepancies between the accounts of the synoptic gospels.
Syntax	The study of the arrangement of words in a sentence and of how word order affects meaning.
Synthesis	A combining of dissimilar or even opposed ideas into a new hybrid idea.
Talmud	The definitive compilation of rabbinical rulings (Mishnah) combined with related commentary (Gemarah).
<i>Terminus a quo</i>	The earliest time at which an event could have occurred; literally "boundary from which."
<i>Terminus ad quem</i>	The latest time at which an event could have occurred; literally "boundary to which."
Tetragrammaton	The four-letter personal name of the biblical God, יהוה, often translated LORD, probably pronounced Yahweh.
Textual Criticism	The study and comparison of ancient manuscripts in the hope of determining as accurately as possible the author's original wording.
Thematic Context	The contextual flow of thought in a passage. The topic of a passage.
Theology	The study of God, and of topics relating to the God of the Bible.

Theophany

A visible manifestation of God.

Thesis

The main idea in a persuasive argument, or the beginning idea in a dialectical argument.

***Toledoth* Formula**

The repeated colophon in Genesis using the word toledoth (= [written] history of).

Translate, Translation

To convey the meaning of words in a different language.

Transliterate, Transliteration

To change the letters of a word into the corresponding letters of a different language.

Type, Typology

A person, thing or event that foreshadows its more important future counterpart.

Usage

How a word is used in a specific place or written corpus, and thereby defined within that context.

Verb

A class of words that expresses an action.

Vulgate

The Latin translation of the Bible made by Jerome around AD 400.

Wisdom Literature

A literary genre concerned with communicating divine wisdom; it includes Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

Yom YHWH

Hebrew for, “The Day of The LORD.”