



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

How to Understand and Interpret the Bible (Hermeneutics)

Lesson #1

Introduction

Anyone who wants to preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ needs to know how to use the Bible. Jesus and the prophets taught that the Bible is the Word of God. It is the final authority for everything we believe and teach about Jesus Christ. Jesus' apostle Peter speaks of the Bible **"as a light that shines in a dark place"** (2 Peter 1:19). Yet Peter also wrote in the same letter: **"Consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation – as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures"** (2 Peter 3:15-16).

From this we learn that the Bible clearly shows us the way to salvation in Jesus Christ. But at the same time the words of the Bible can be twisted to mean something different from what they say. Some sections of the Bible are harder to understand than others. It is these parts of the Bible that are most easily twisted by persons who are untaught and unstable. The devil himself likes to misuse the words of the Bible for his own evil purposes. He even tried to use the Bible to get Jesus to sin, as we learn from Matthew 4:5-6. But Jesus defeated the devil's plan by quoting another Bible passage that proved that the devil was misusing the Bible.

In the same way pastors and preachers today need to know how to correct wrong interpretations of the Bible by a correct use and understanding of the Bible. For this reason, those who are studying to be pastors should know to understand and interpret the Bible correctly. The Bible interprets itself. This means that clear passages explain and help us understand the more difficult passages.

Questions

1. What did the apostle Peter say about the Bible in the first chapter of his second letter? Read the whole chapter.
2. What did Peter say about some of the writings of the apostle Paul?
3. How did the devil use the Bible in his temptation of Jesus? (Mathew 4:1-10) How did Jesus respond?
4. Why is it important for Christians preachers to know how to correctly interpret the Bible?