

# How to Study the Bible – Part 4

August 17, 2019

R.C. Sproul: “Knowing Scripture”

## Practical Rules for Biblical Interpretation

### #6: Note the Presence of Parallelisms

“Parallelism may be defined as a relationship between two or more sentences or clauses that correspond in similarity or are set with each other.”

#### a) **Synonymous parallelism: two lines present the same thought**

Pro 19:5 A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape.

Psa 120:2 Deliver me, O LORD, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue.

Isa 53:5a But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;

#### b) **Antithetic parallelism: two lines present contrasting thoughts**

Pro 13:1 A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

Pro 8:35-36 For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD, (36) but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death."

Psa 1:6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

#### c) **Synthetic parallelism: the completion or the building up of a thought from the first thought to the 2<sup>nd</sup> thought**

Psa 92:9 For behold, your enemies, O LORD, for behold, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered.

Psa 29:1-2 Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. (2)

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

### #7: Note the Difference Between Proverb and Law

Proverbs reflect wisdom for godly living, but they are not to be given the same weight as law. While proverbs are incredibly useful, following them does not guarantee results but are rather present the “normal” result.

Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Pro 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

Also, consider that giving a proverb the same weight as law can result in unintended contradictions:

#### **Question: Do we answer a fool or not?**

Pro 26:4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.

Pro 26:5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

#### **Question: Are you for me or against me?**

Mat 12:30 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

Luk 9:50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you."

## **#8: Observe the Difference Between the Spirit and the Letter of the Law**

Rather than merely focusing on the words, Jesus points us to the intent.

Sproul: “To obey the letter while violating the spirit makes one technically righteous but actually corrupt.”

Mat 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' (28) But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Mat 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' (22) But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

## **#9: Be Careful With Parables**

### **What is the Purpose of Parables?**

Mat 13:10-14 Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" (11) And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. (12) For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (13) This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. (14) Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.

### **The parable of the sower is allegorical. Should we interpret all parables allegorically?**

#### **Augustine's Commentary on the Good Samaritan**

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho; Adam himself is meant; Jerusalem is the heavenly city of peace, from whose blessedness Adam fell; Jericho means the moon, and signifies our mortality, because it is born, waxes, wanes, and dies. Thieves are the devil and his angels. Who stripped him, namely; of his immortality; and beat him, by persuading him to sin; and left him half-dead, because in so far as man can understand and know God, he lives, but in so far as he is wasted and oppressed by sin, he is dead; he is therefore called half-dead. The priest and the Levite who saw him and passed by, signify the priesthood and ministry of the Old Testament which could profit nothing for salvation. Samaritan means Guardian, and therefore the Lord Himself is signified by this name. The binding of the wounds is the restraint of sin. Oil is the comfort of good hope; wine the exhortation to work with fervent spirit. The beast is the flesh in which He deigned to come to us. The being set upon the beast is belief in the incarnation of Christ. The inn is the Church, where travelers returning to their heavenly country are refreshed after pilgrimage. The morrow is after the resurrection of the Lord. The two pence are either the two precepts of love, or the promise of this life and of that which is to come. The innkeeper is the Apostle (Paul). The supererogatory payment is either his counsel of celibacy, or the fact that he worked with his own hands lest he should be a burden to any of the weaker brethren when the Gospel was new, though it was lawful for him “to live by the gospel”[1]

[1] Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*, II, 19 –slightly abridged as cited in Dodd, C.H., *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Scribners, 1961), pg. 1-2.

Sproul: “The safest way to treat the parables is to look for one basic central point in them.”  
See Luke 10:25-37