



Methods used to properly interpret the bible are known as “hermeneutics”. It’s absolutely critical that everything is interpreted as it’s meant to be (literal, figurative, symbolic, poetic, etc.). All legalism and religious cults exist because someone is misinterpreting one or more verses in the bible. When reading the bible, there are many different types of linguistic structures as well as somewhat difficult concepts related to forms of government, human condition (psychology), and religious structures. Below is a list of words, structures, and concepts that will be encountered when reading through the bible. When interpreting difficult verses, we should always try to find two or more supporting verses “*by two or three witnesses shall every word be established*”. All scripture should be assumed to be literal unless there is a contextual reason (metaphor, symbolism, etc.) for it not to be. Most importantly, the Holy Spirit is the true interpreter of scripture.

Linguistic (Language)

- **Literal** - taking words in their usual or most basic sense without metaphor, allegory, or symbolism.
- **Metaphor** – a figure of speech containing an implied comparison, in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used of one thing is applied to another. (ex. the curtain of night.)
- **Allegory** - a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.
- **Symbolism** - something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance. (ex. the lion is a symbol of courage).
- **Figurative** - departing from a literal use of words (ex. metaphor, allegory, symbolic, etc)
- **Simile** - a way of describing something by comparing it to something else, often using the word "like" or "as." (ex. He’s as brave as a lion.)
- **Hyperbole** - the use of exaggeration to create emphasis or effect. (ex. I’ve told you a million times.)
- **Synonym** - a word having the same or nearly the same meaning as another in the language. (ex. happy, joyful, elated)
- **Antonym** - a word opposite in meaning to another. (ex. fast is an antonym of slow)
- **Homonym** - a word pronounced the same as another but differing in meaning, whether spelled the same way or not. (ex. heir and air)
- **Anthropomorphism** – also called personification, the attribution of human traits, emotions, and intentions to non-human entities. (ex. the thunder grumbled like an old man.)
- **Idiom** - a phrase or a fixed expression that has a figurative, or sometimes literal, meaning. An idiom’s figurative meaning is different from the literal meaning. (ex. She is pulling my leg)
- **Metonymy** - a figure of speech in which a thing or concept is called not by its own name but rather by the name of something associated in meaning with that thing or concept. (ex. as when "dish" is used to refer not to a plate but to the food it contains.)
- **Synecdoche** - a figure of speech in which a term for a part of something refers to the whole of something, or vice versa. (ex. calling a television the tube.)
- **Onomatopoeia** - use of words which sound like the thing described. (ex. “Bang” or “Crash”)

Human Psychology

- **Narcissism** - excessive or erotic interest in oneself and one’s physical appearance. Extreme selfishness, with a grandiose view of one’s own talents and a craving for admiration.
- **Hedonism** - the pursuit of pleasure; sensual self-indulgence.
- **Licentiousness** - lacking legal or moral restraints; especially disregarding sexual restraints and marked by disregard for rules of correctness.
- **Altruism** – pro-social behaviors a person carries out without considering his or her own safety or interests.
- **Catharsis** - the process of expressing strongly felt but usually repressed emotions.
- **Determinism** - the doctrine that all events are determined by specific causal factors that are potentially knowable.
- **Egocentrism** - the inability of one person to take the perspective of another person. Making “self” the center of all things.
- **Addiction (Stronghold)** - a condition in which the body requires a drug or activity in order to function without physical or psychological reactions to its absence; often the outcome of dependence.

Social/Government Structures

- **Republic** – a form of government or country in which power resides in elected individuals representing the citizen body and government leaders exercise power according to **the rule of law**.
- **Democracy** – a system of government in which all the people of a state or polity are involved in making decisions about its affairs, typically by voting to elect representatives. Democracy is further defined as government by the people by **rule of the majority**.
- **Theocracy** - the government of a state by immediate divine guidance or by officials who are regarded as divinely guided.
- **Kritocracy** – a system of rule by judges.
- **Amphictyony** - a league of states united for mutual protection and the worship of a common god.
- **Fascism** - an authoritarian and nationalistic right-wing system of government and social organization.
- **Communism** - a system of social organization based on the holding of all property in common, actual ownership being ascribed to the community as a whole or to the state.
- **Socialism** - a system of social organization that advocates the vesting of the ownership and control of the means of production and distribution, of capital, land, etc., in the community as a whole.
- **Monarchy** - a form of government in which sovereignty is actually or nominally embodied in one or several individual(s) reigning until death or abdication.
- **Oligarchy** - a form of power structure in which power effectively rests with a small number of people. These people could be distinguished by royalty, wealth, family ties, education, corporate, religious or military control.
- **Genocide** - the systematic destruction of one group of people, often an ethnic, religious, or racial group, by another.

Religious

- **Halleluiah** – Praise the Lord! (**Amen** – So be it.)
- **Shelkinah** - the dwelling or settling of the divine presence of God.
- **Hermeneutics** – the methodology for interpreting the bible.
- **Exegesis** – Method of “drawing out” the meaning of scripture (good).
- **Eisegesis** – Method of “Reading into” the meaning of scripture (bad).
- **Propitiation** - the act of appeasing or making God well-disposed, thus incurring divine favor or avoiding divine retribution.
- **Salvation** - deliverance from sin and its consequences, that is brought about by faith in Christ.
- **Judgement** - the process of forming opinions, reaching conclusions, and making critical evaluations of events and people.
- **Eschatology** – the part of theology that studies the future including: death, judgment, and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind.
- **Premillennialism** – the belief that Jesus will return and rule on the earth for one thousand years.
- **Amillennialism** - the rejection of the belief that Jesus will have a literal, thousand-year-long, physical reign on the earth.
- **Preterist** - view that interprets some or all prophecies of the Bible as events which have already happened.
- **Arminianism** - based on ideas of Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609) and his supporters known as “Remonstrants”. Supports loss of salvation.
- **Calvinism** - also called the Reformed tradition is a major branch of Protestantism that follows the theological tradition of John Calvin. Supports pre-election of the saved by God and not by choice.
- **Lutheranism** - a branch of Protestant Christianity that identifies with the theology of Martin Luther. Supports salvation by sacraments.