



# Basics of Bible Interpretation

by Bob Smith

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## Introduction

A constant source of encouragement to me and to many others has been the example of my dear friend and compatriot, Bob Roe. His diligent, careful study of God's Word, his obedient response to its truth, and his able teaching ministry which is the result, are a challenge to anyone who sees the possibility of being taught by God. Without formal theological training, he rates in my book as able apologist, thorough theologian, compassionate pastor and all-around man of God. I'm glad he's also my friend. I dedicate this book to him. May his tribe increase.

I hope that this book will meet a need. Many of God's people have expressed to me that they do not have a handle on how to approach the Bible to become good, accurate interpreters of its contents.

There are seminary courses on hermeneutics (the art of Bible interpretation) and books on the subject, but the courses are out of reach for most and the books are often too voluminous and imposing to invite reading. Yet I believe that God wants all of us to be able to study the Bible intelligently and understand its message...hence this book.

I have a thing about thick books and big words, so if you're expecting an exhaustive (and exhausting) tome, replete with all the theological jargon, you'll be disappointed. This is not a scholarly treatise with a high fog rating. As did Paul the apostle, I want to use great plainness of speech, for no one should be excluded from the profitable and exciting possibility of discovering the truth of God through his own independent study of the Bible.

I have tried to assume as little as possible on the part of the reader, so some of the material is on a rather elementary level. If it seems too basic, remember that every year football teams go back to the basics of blocking, tackling, running, kicking, and passing--so reviewing the basics of Bible interpretation is not altogether bad. I believe you may find plenty to challenge your thinking, however, even if you are already

somewhat skilled in interpreting the Scriptures.

This is a study book. If you do not have your Bible side by side with it as you study you will miss much of its value. The format I have used is simple. I have cited principles by which one can interpret the Scriptures, then I have illustrated the use of those principles to analyze a portion of scripture. You will want to follow my analysis step by step in your own Bible to really appreciate what I'm trying to do. You may not agree with all of my interpretive opinions, but I hope you will have gained the capability of reaching your own conclusions based on your personal application of interpretive principles.

The theme song you should be singing throughout is:

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"  
(Matt. 4:4).

God has spoken! His are words to live by! So we must seek to understand the *Basics of Bible Interpretation*.

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## **Acknowledgments**

While I will attempt to acknowledge sources where possible, I'm sure I have borrowed much from many faithful teachers and authors whose material I have absorbed over the years so that they seem like my own. I am especially indebted to Milton S. Terry's *Biblical Hermeneutics*, a comprehensive treatment typical of the careful scholarship of the nineteenth century. I marvel that anyone had the time and scholarly persistence to produce such a thoroughly documented and illustrated volume. I'm also amazed I got through its 782 pages! This book won't be half that hard, but I hope it will be at least half as helpful.

I owe so much to so many, I hardly know where to start and where to stop in acknowledgment of my indebtedness. But I must say "thanks" to many of my fellow-workers for their help in the preparation of this book, to those whose kindly critiques have been so valuable: Bob Roe, Dick and Judy Grant, Jim Blain, David Roper, Ron Ritchie, Steve Newman, Bev Blake, Patrick Cunningham, Carleen Brooks, Jean McAllister, Paul Winslow, Steve and Erica Lawry.

Special thanks are due David Roper for his contribution on Old Testament Hebrew and his study questions on 2 Timothy. Then, last but far from least, there is the labor of love represented in the multiple typings and retypings by Dottie Canoose. Thanks, Dottie.

It's always a special joy to work with our son, Dave Smith, on the art work for my books. I like the father/son act. Besides, it means he has to read what his "ole dad" writes, and I love to share the great truth God has given us with him and all our loved ones.

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## ***About the Author-A Tribute***

The man---a combination of lively intelligence, subtle humor, keen insight into people, gentleness of spirit plus an aggressive attitude of "Let's get the job done."

The pastor---an engineer by training with thirteen years of experience in steel fabricating prior to an equal number of years as an associate pastor at Peninsula Bible Church. His impact on PBC has been greatest in expository Bible teaching to adult groups, scriptural marriage counseling, home Bible class development, and church government.

The believer---an overwhelming belief that Christ will be head of his church and head of each believer if only we allow him opportunity; a quiet unshakable confidence in Christ's power to live in and through each member of his Body. An acceptance of responsibility as an elder and pastoral spiritual leader which is based on total commitment that the ministry of the church is to be carried out by each believer.

The husband and father---a successful husband of thirty-seven years and father of twin sons. A compassionate neighbor and father figure to many youngsters and young adults who prize highly their friendship with Bob Smith.

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