

## **Dr. Dave Mathewson Hermeneutics, Lecture 1 \_Intro. Definitions**

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Welcome to this course on biblical hermeneutics. This is a course based on one taught at Gordon College. And what I hope to do during this time is introduce you to a number of things.

As we'll see, hermeneutics can be a term that's very misunderstood and used very broadly and often used to cover a number of things. So what I want to do is, first of all, we'll look at the issue of what hermeneutics is in this lecture session. What do we mean by hermeneutics? And how does it relate to other terms such as interpretation and exegesis, other terms that you've hopefully heard about.

We'll also talk a little bit about the different methods of interpretation, different methods of criticism, and how those can be useful in interpretation and understanding the biblical text. We'll talk a little bit about the history of interpretation and the history of hermeneutics. It's important to understand that never do we just sit down and start to interpret, but we stand at the end of a long line of others who have wrestled with and thought about the biblical text and who have attempted to understand it.

So it's important to understand where we stand in relationship to others who have gone before us and have interpreted the text. So one of the things that I would like you to do as well in this course is learn the names of key figures who are associated with certain hermeneutical movements. So that cluster of ideas, hopefully we can cover in this time.

I want to begin by asking the question, what is hermeneutics and why is it necessary? Why do we need to sit through a series of lectures to learn how to read and interpret

the Bible? Why don't we just sit down and read it? And as you have, perhaps I've heard of countless stories where persons have said, oh, I don't need all this. All I do is just sit down and read the Bible. But we're going to see even that kind of approach reveals a number of assumptions about how we understand and read the biblical text.

So I want to start today by asking what is hermeneutics and why do we need it? Why is it necessary? First of all, what is hermeneutics? This is, as I've already said, a term that is frequently understood in a variety of ways. In fact, the more you read about it, the more you find that it can mean a number of things, depending on who you're talking to or who you're reading. For some, hermeneutics means the application of the correct methods of interpretation to the biblical text by applying the right method or the correct technique to the biblical text.

One then can determine the correct meaning of it. For some, interpretation is the actual study itself of the biblical text, not just the understanding of the correct methods, but the actual study of the text itself. But usually the way hermeneutics is used today, although, again, technically this lecture series won't be restricted just to talking about what some think is hermeneutics, that is the philosophy of how we understand and what we do when we try to understand the meaning of something.

But we will talk about different methods and we'll arrange a lot more broadly to consider different approaches and different methods of interpretation and to consider how those can be fruitful interpreting the biblical text. But hermeneutics has usually come to be understood more broadly in biblical studies to mean not just the application of sound principles and techniques of the biblical text, but hermeneutics actually has come to, first of all, be used more broadly than just understanding the Bible to the broader human disciplines of how we understand it all, whether it's in the sciences or literature or history or any other discipline, how is

it that we understand? What are we doing when we're trying to understand something else or some other facet of communication? So hermeneutics has broadened out far beyond biblical studies as we'll see, yet what is being done with hermeneutics even outside of biblical studies affects the way that we approach and interpret the Bible as well. But hermeneutics, again, more than just the proper application of techniques and the correct methods of understanding the Bible, hermeneutics has come to ask the question, what does it mean to understand something? How do we understand? Again, for our purposes, we're talking about understanding a biblical text, a New or Old Testament text, but how do we understand that? What do we do when we attempt to understand a biblical text? And so that will be one of the focuses of this series of lectures is to look at issues related to what are we doing when we try to read and understand a biblical text? What are we doing when we interpret it? How do we come to understanding? The word hermeneutics, as most textbooks will tell you, the word hermeneutics itself is a term that stems from a Greek word that was used of the god Hermas.

It comes from the Greek word *hermeneuine*, which means to translate, to understand, to explain, to interpret. And the term was used of the Greek god Hermas. And when someone would want to understand something or someone would go to consult Hermas to receive a message from the gods, Hermas kind of acted as an interpreter or a go-between and would communicate and interpret the message from the gods to the person who is inquiring about the information.

So he kind of acted, Hermas acted as a mediator, a go-between between the message of the gods and the human being. And so hermeneutics can, in a sense, be seen as a go-between. It's a mediator between the text that we're trying to understand and meaning and the interpreter.

Human understanding then bridges the gap between the text and us so that we can make sense of things. And again, for our purposes, so that we can make sense of the biblical text. So very kind of basically hermeneutics has to do with how do we understand something? What do we do when we attempt to understand something? But how does this understanding of hermeneutics relate to other disciplines, such as what we call interpretation? Although a lot of persons will use hermeneutics and interpretation almost identically.

How does it relate to exegesis? Which is a term that will usually be associated with what you do if you take a biblical language course, such as Greek or Hebrew, exegesis. How does it relate to those? How does it differ from exegesis? Exegesis is usually understood more as the specific application of sound principles and techniques to draw out the meaning of the text in its original context and in its original meaning. So exegesis is probing a text from its various angles.

Texts have literary aspects to them. They also have historical dimensions. Biblical texts have a theological dimension.

They have a cultural dimension, a linguistic dimension. So that exegesis is probing the text from various angles, attempting to draw out the meaning as the author probably originally intended and in its historical context. But again, hermeneutics is much broader than that.

It gets at the issue of not just the application of principles, but how do we understand? What does it mean to understand? What does it mean to interpret a text? What do we do when we understand and apply a text? Interpretation then is also slightly different than hermeneutics in that interpretation refers then to the actual practice of understanding a text. One might consider hermeneutics more as theorizing about how we understand and what we do when we understand a text.

Interpretation could be seen more as the actual understanding of it, the actual interpretation of a text or the actual application of methods to understand a text.

So both hermeneutics and interpretation then ask the question and raise the questions of how do we understand a text? What do we do when we understand a text? And what are the correct methods and techniques that are utilized to understand a text? That raises a question is when we think about hermeneutics and interpretation, we are asking the question of what role do three different features of the communication play? That is, there is the author that produces the text and there is also the text itself, the product that the author's produced that communicates, and then there's the reader that tries to understand and make sense of the text. So interpretation asks the question about the author, the text and the reader, particularly which one or perhaps all three, but which one of those plays the primary role when it comes to understanding of a text? Where does meaning lie? What should be our focus when we try to understand a biblical text? Are we asking the question of the author? Are we focusing on the author's intention? This would be as many approaches to hermeneutics would characterize as the author's intention, an approach known as authorial intent. So we focus on kind of going behind the text.

Historically, people have wondered what was the author intending? What did the author intend to communicate by producing this text? So one feature of hermeneutics is to focus on the author and the author's intention communicating as the primary locus of meaning. The second feature of hermeneutics or second place that persons often focus on when it comes to hermeneutics then is the text or some have called that focusing within the text. So the author would be going behind the text to ask questions about the author's intention, what the author is trying to do, but a text centered hermeneutic would focus on the text itself, the finished product, that the empirical evidence that we have in the form of the written text that is the primary locus of meaning.

And interpretation. So the text, according to this approach, often the text is seen to have a life of its own. So some would even say irrespective of who the author was and what he attempted to communicate, the text now has a life of its own.

And so the text is the primary object of our interpretation. So we try to understand the Old or New Testament passage itself and the way it has been put together. The third place where interpretation or meaning is thought to lie would be in the reader.

That is, readers make sense of text. And some would suggest, therefore, without a reader to make sense of it and read it, especially if we don't have access to the author, especially biblical authors that are long gone, it's ultimately the reader who must make sense of the text. So we come from different cultures, we come from different backgrounds, we come from different perspectives, we come from different theological bents, and this will all affect the way that we read the text.

And so some would say that the primary meaning resides in the reader and his or her ability to make sense of a biblical text. As we'll see, as we begin to move through, especially the first part, first half or so of this series of lectures on hermeneutics, we'll focus on those three aspects. And notice how many of the methods revolve around those three aspects.

Methods of interpretation and hermeneutical philosophies that focus on the author, others that focus on the text, and more recently, those that focus primarily on the reader. And we'll see even historically, that's kind of the order in which hermeneutics and interpretation has developed. But we will ask the question of then, when we think about hermeneutics and interpretation, what is the relationship between these three? And does one of them get more importance and prominence than others? Or

are they all three equally valid? So again, we're going to look at the theories of interpretation.

We'll look at the history of interpretation and how that affects the way we look at the biblical text. We'll look at different methods of interpretation, different methods of criticism, and how those can help us also interact with the biblical text. Why is hermeneutics necessary? Again, we've all heard stories of someone that says, well, I don't need hermeneutics.

All I need to do is sit down and read the text. Why not just sit down and read the Bible for itself? But as we're going to see, that approach actually reveals an assumption about hermeneutics and understanding as far as how we read a text and what it means to interpret a biblical text. But why is hermeneutics necessary? Hermeneutics functions primarily, and again, when I talk about hermeneutics, often I'm talking about both hermeneutics in its philosophical sense about how we understand, but also hermeneutics in terms of how some understand it as interpretation and the correct techniques and methods of interpreting a biblical text.

But why is hermeneutics necessary? Hermeneutics provides a bridge between a text produced at a time and during a time in a culture, in a language, in a history, in a religious and philosophical and political environment that is very, very different than our own, at least to most of us. It is very, very different than our own. So that at times we're prone to misunderstand if we're not aware of the difference between our own perspective and that of the ancient text that we're trying to understand.

However, at the same time, I'm convinced that there are commonalities that are necessary for understanding. If there were no commonalities at all, we simply could not understand the biblical text. So there's not such a wide gap or distance that it's hopeless to ever think that we can overcome it.

But hermeneutics is necessary because again, we are reading a series of documents produced at a time, in an environment, a culture, a situation that is very, very different in some respects and distinct from our own. And hermeneutics helps us to bridge that gap so that we can arrive at an understanding of the biblical text. There are a number of gaps that hermeneutics helps to bridge a number of ways that the biblical text is distanced from us.

For example, there is a temporal distance. The Bible deals with, interpreting the Bible where you're dealing with texts that are produced 2000, nearly 2000 years and more. Earlier than our own existence.

So it's imperative then that we are able to recognize that distance and be able to bridge that gap as well. I like to illustrate that with a story. I remember one time when I lived in Montana and I was going to college and trying to do any summer jobs I could to help earn tuition dollars.

And I remember I helped one rancher tear down a log cabin. And the log cabin had been built in the early 1900s, 1920s or 30, something like that. And it had been updated, but some of the logs were still in very good shape.

So this rancher hoped to dismantle the cabin carefully and save most of the logs to build his own house because a lot of them were still in very good shape and obviously would save him quite a bit of money. So he called me up and asked if I would help him take this cabin apart and help him salvage these logs. So I met him and we began to work in this cabin.

And I noticed as we began to remove the logs, in between the logs were some newspapers, which was often used to stuff the holes to keep out the cold Montana winter winds. And I started looking at these newspapers and reading, I was drawn to



the political cartoons. And I began to look at them and realized I had no idea what I was reading.

I could not make any sense. A lot of it was simply because I was reading literature from a very different time period. Although it was only 75, 80 years ago from the time I was reading it, I still had trouble understanding.

And some of it was completely a mystery to me simply because it was produced at a time period of which I was not aware of what was going on. How much more is this true with texts produced over two millennia ago and earlier? So hermeneutics then, a study of hermeneutics and interpretation helps us to bridge this temporal distance, especially when the authors and the readers are not here to consult. So there's a temporal distance that stands between us, the interpreter and the biblical text.

And hermeneutics is a way to bridge that gap. There's a second distance and some of these are related. These are not all distinct categories.

There's probably a little bit of overlap between them. But another distance between us as interpreters and the biblical text is a cultural difference. In the biblical world, whether the ancient Near Eastern world or the Greco-Roman world of the New Testament reveals a world that has a very different culture and very different cultural values often than the world that we live in.

Sometimes I often find that interpreters and readers from third world countries sometimes have an easier time of reading biblical texts because they come from a culture that is much closer to the biblical text at times and the biblical culture than my North American individualistic technologically advanced culture that I live in. But still there are often cultural values and differences that at times have to be overcome in trying to understand the biblical text, at least as the author attempted to

communicate. Again, we live in a very individualistic and technological age, at least in North America, where upward mobility and the fact that I get a paycheck every two weeks sometimes functions to distance me from the culture that produced the biblical text.

To give you a couple of examples, some of these we may return to later on in the class and actually deal with them. Others, I just mentioned them to demonstrate the struggle in trying to understand the text. First Corinthians 11.

The other disclaimer I have to make is that I'm a New Testament professor by vocation and interest. So my examples will be weighted towards the New Testament, but I will try to bring in as many Old Testament examples as I can and which I'm comfortable with to also demonstrate the different principles that we'll be working on. But First Corinthians 11, a New Testament example.

In First Corinthians 11, Paul addresses the issue of men and women and their relationship together within the context of the church as it gathers for worship. And his instruction is primarily to women and how they are able to prophesy. And he begins to discuss the fact that he permits them to prophesy as long as their head is properly covered.

And my purpose at this point is not to deal with that text at length or to solve the problem, but just to demonstrate that what is the significance of that head covering in that text? Does it have any resemblance to head coverings that we are familiar with today, whether it's in a Muslim culture or some other expression? Is Paul referring to head covering or to hair is another debate in that text. What does it mean? What kind of background and cultural information is Paul drawing on that we need to be aware of if we're to understand Paul's instructions in First Corinthians chapter 11? So First Corinthians 11 is one example of, of I think where we will be in

danger of misunderstanding that text, at least as Paul was attempting to communicate without some kind of a knowledge of the cultural background that informed Paul's instructions related to head coverings. Another example, Revelation chapter 13.

Revelation chapter 13, John portrays the Roman empire of the day as a hideous beast. And one of the question is why is John so, not only in chapter 13, but throughout the book of Revelation, why is John rather negative towards the government? Why is John's portrayal of the Roman empire in the book of Revelation rather bleak and dark to the effect that he portrays it as this beast that is meant to do harm? Well, again, without solving that right now, part of the answer is certainly that in the first century Roman empire, you simply could not disentangle issues of politics and religion. And so for someone to be involved in and belong to and live out life and even make a living in the context of the Roman empire brought a number of challenges because it was often would engage them in compromising idolatrous religious practices.

At least a lot of times in our modern day governments and religion are kept separate, but in the first century, most of what John is aiming his criticism at cannot be understood unless we understand that in the first century, religion and politics and economy were closely intertwined. And certainly part of John's critique of the Roman government has to do with the idolatrous religious practices that one would engage with if you also participated in Rome politically and economically. Luke chapter 11.

What is the significance of Luke chapter 11, the parable of the so-called Good Samaritan? What is the significance of the fact that the Samaritan is a hero of the story? Again, we will misunderstand this parable, especially in our modern day North American context where the Samaritan has been domesticated. We have things like

Good Samaritan food pantries and Good Samaritan hospitals, et cetera, et cetera. We've domesticated the Samaritan.

But as we'll see a few times throughout these lectures, that's not how they would have looked at the Samaritans in the first century, especially a first century Jew. And so without understanding something of the culture and how the Samaritans were viewed, one is likely to miss the force of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Or what about Luke 15 and the well-known parable of the prodigal son? Once again, I have to confess for years, for years, I read that parable and perhaps some of this is because I grew up or spent several years in Montana, surrounded by ranches.

And I pictured the farm or this father living on a ranch out in the boondock somewhere or separated from society. In Montana, sometimes you can drive for five miles and still not be to the end of your driveway, let alone within the sight of another house. So I envisioned this father off somewhere on a ranch out in the middle of nowhere.

But what if he is living in a typical middle Eastern village and everyone knew what was going on and everyone was observing what was happening? What then was the significance of the father running out to greet and hug a son who had treated him the way he did? No one in the town would have missed what went on. Yet, if we don't understand the culture and if we're, as I did, if we're too quick to read our own culture into what's going on, again, we may misunderstand the parable or at the very least, we may miss something important. But again, with the parable of the prodigal son, what's the significance of the father running out and greeting the son and hugging him before the watching eyes of the community? I'm convinced.

The Book of Ruth. Interestingly, towards the end of the Book of Ruth, you have this very interesting reference to the men sitting at the gate. I mean, are they being lazy?

And so we sometimes picture the women are probably working and cooking and doing all kinds of things.

And here's the men sitting around at the gate, just being lazy. The text takes on a different color when you recognize that this is where the leaders met to decide important business for the town. And so these men are not being lazy and just sitting there shooting the breeze and talking.

They're conducting, most likely conducting business. Or how might our individualistic culture affect the way we read certain biblical texts that might be better understood as addressing a culture that was more attuned to community and a culture where the persons understood the communal relationship that they belong to, that more important than who you were as an individual was the group that you belong to. So there's a cultural distance between us and the biblical texts that could cause us to misunderstand the text.

There's also a historical distance. Again, this is related to the previous two, but the biblical texts record and assume events that are far removed from us. And furthermore, often the biblical texts are not interested in giving us a detailed blow for blow account of everything that happened.

And for those of us that were not there to witness the events at times, then we struggled to understand what was the event that was taking place? What was the nature of the event? What historical circumstances led up to what the author is talking about and discussing? Again, for example, in John chapter four, and we have already mentioned Luke chapter 11, Luke chapter 11, the parable of the Good Samaritan, but John chapter four, where Jesus goes to the woman at the well, who is a Samaritan. Once again, we will misunderstand these texts if we fail to understand the long history of antagonism between the Jewish people and the Samaritans, and

how this affected the way the Jews viewed this certain group. When that is taken into consideration, the fact that the Samaritan is a hero of a parable, and the fact that Jesus would go visit one is rather startling, and would be rather shocking to the first readers.

Without understanding the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 AD, one will have a difficulty understanding texts like Matthew 24 and Mark 13, Luke 21 that record where Jesus, I think at least partially addresses the situation surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem. And Old Testament narratives are full of all kinds of references to historical events, whether that be references to accounts of warfare, or the political situation in Israel. But the point is, often there's a historical distance that separates us from the biblical text, and hermeneutics helps us to bridge that gap.

Another distance is there is also a linguistic distance. The Old and New Testament are written in at least two languages. The Old Testament also contains parts of a couple of texts in a third language, Aramaic.

But the Old Testament and New Testament are written in two languages that are very different than our own, most of our own. And so, once again, hermeneutics and principles of interpretation help us to bridge that gap and help us to overcome that distance. So for example, in the Old and New Testament, in contrast to how it seems to be used today, and we'll return to this issue later under translation, often the Hebrew and Greek words that we often in English translate man, or could be translated male or man, or brother, very masculine terms, in the Old and New Testament seem to be terms that could be used of groups of both male and female.

And as I understand it, that's becoming less and less prominent, especially in the English language and a number of other languages as well. So the Old and New

Testament text may use language in a very different way than, especially gender type of language than we're used to in some of our languages. Or words seldom mean the same thing, even words that stem from a similar root, or words that are derivative from another language, from one language, from an earlier language.

Word meanings almost never completely overlap. So that we cannot, even though we have a rough equivalent, we cannot assume that the meaning of a word in one language is going to approximate the meaning of the Hebrew or Greek word. I still remember, even in one of my seminary classes, a student struggling with the fact that Paul would use the word hope.

Obviously, he didn't use the English word hope, but we translate the Greek word, *elpis*, that Paul used with the English word hope. And the student struggled that Paul would see Christianity and Jesus return as merely a hope. And part of the problem was he was trying to understand Paul's use of the word with our English word hope, and struggled for quite some time due to a failure to understand that words simply very seldom, if ever, overlap between languages.

Another interesting one that I'm always interested in is when it comes to interpreting Greek tenses, for example. Unlike English, that is primarily temporal in orientation, we have past, present, and future, Greek verb tenses didn't seem to primarily indicate time. That was indicated by other means.

So that when someone is dealing with a Greek text, we have to be careful when we're interpreting the Greek tenses, or even Hebrew tenses, that we're not reading, for example, our English verb system and tense system back into the Greek or Hebrew way. So those are just some examples of how there is a linguistic difference between the language that the Old New Testament was written in, and the language

that we now try to understand it in, for myself of modern day, 21st century English. There is a fifth difference, or fifth distance, and that is a geographical difference.

So there's a temporal distance, the biblical texts were written in a very different time, at least around 2000 millennia and earlier, from our own time. That also creates a cultural difference. The biblical text attests to a culture with cultural values very different from our own.

There's a historical difference. The biblical text refers to events, and assumes events that, once again, we are separated from. There's also a linguistic difference in that the biblical texts are written in languages that may or may not correspond to the languages that we speak today.

The next difference, then, is a geographical difference. There are a number of interesting geographical features that, again, are referred to or assumed in the biblical text that may not be familiar to modern readers, but that might influence the way we understand the biblical text. And again, hermeneutics and interpretation help us to sort of bridge that gap.

For example, an interesting one from the Old Testament, when Jonah flees, the book of Jonah, God calls him to go to the Assyrians and to preach the gospel, and Jonah refuses and flees to Tarshish. If you look at a map, you'll find Jonah didn't just kind of go to the town next door. Jonah went about as far as you could get.

But unless one's familiar with the geography of the land, one fails to see that the extreme that Jonah would go to, not to go preach to this wicked, horrible nation that God was calling him to go to. Another very intriguing example comes from the book of Revelation, and one of the letters in the first couple of chapters, Revelation



chapter three, and a letter to the church in Laodicea. And starting in verse 15, I'll read verses 15 and 16 of chapter three.

John says, actually John quoting the words of Jesus, communicating the words of Jesus to the church of Laodicea, one of the seven churches in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey, that John was addressing his revelation, his apocalypse to. But in verses 15 to 16, Jesus says to the church through John, he says, I know your deeds that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were either one or the other.

So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. Now, usually when we interpret this text and the way I was taught to read it was from my own perspective. That is usually hot and cold were seen as sort of binary opposite.

Hot was a good thing and cold was something bad. To be hot meant to be in the kind of the religious jargon which I grew up in. To be hot meant to be on fire for Christ and to be cold means to be turned off, to completely be antagonistic towards Christ, to refuse to obey, to refuse to follow, to want nothing to do with Christ.

And then lukewarm was placed kind of in between. So you have hot up here, which is a good thing. Someone that's their relationship with Christ and their witness is vibrant and down here is cold.

They're completely dead and turned off and want nothing to do with Christ. And in between is lukewarm. These are the Christians that are wishy-washy and they ride the fence as I was told.

And they don't wanna refuse or reject Christ, but they really won't take a stand. They just wanna sit there in the middle. And so when Christ says, I wish you were either

hot or cold, instead you're lukewarm, he's saying, at least I wish you would be on fire for me and follow me and complete obedience.

Or at least I wish you would take a stand against me, but at least make know where you stand, don't sit in the middle. And perhaps you've heard Revelation 3, 15 and 16 understood along that line. So John's calling them to do something.

Don't just ride the fence. Even if you hate Christ or reject him, at least do it. Don't be a fence rider.

However, I think the way to understand this text is to understand something about the geography of Laodicea and the surrounding regions. And it places a completely different spin on understanding this text. Laodicea was a fairly typical first century Greco-Roman city, except it had one problem that was usually considered significant and important for first century cities in the Greco-Roman world.

And that was Laodicea didn't have a good water supply. But it's interesting, two cities near Laodicea did. One of those cities was a city named Hierapolis.

And the city of Hierapolis was actually well known for its medicinal hot springs, its mineral springs, and people would even come from some distance sometimes to sit in these springs for their healing and medicinal value. There was another town not too far from Laodicea known as Colossae. And Colossae also had a reputation historically and geographically as being a place known for its refreshingly cold water that was good to drink.

So the problem though was Laodicea had to pipe its water in from somewhere else. And by the time it got there, the water was tepid and it was just grotesque. It really wasn't good for much.

And what I think John is saying, drawing on the geography of the area, he's saying, I wish you were hot or cold. That is, I wish you were hot, like the water of Laodicea that's good for healing, or I wish you were cold, like the refreshing water from Colossae. Instead, you're like your own water supply.

You're lukewarm, you're worthless, and I'm about to vomit you out of your mouth. I mean, you know what it's like to have lukewarm, stale, stagnant water that's been sitting there. No one wants to drink that.

So John is drawing on the geography of the area to remind the readers not to be like their own water supply. So when we read the text from that perspective, it takes on a whole different perspective. Hot and good are both positive metaphors.

They're not opposites, at least in this text. To be hot is to be like the water of Laodicea. To be cold is to be like the good, cold, refreshing water of Colossae.

To be lukewarm is not to ride somewhere in the middle. It's to be the exact opposite. It's to be useless and worthless.

And that's exactly what John warns the Laodiceans of doing, of losing their witness of being useless and worthless, like their own water supply. It's not good for anything, not good for drinking or anything else. A better modern day analogy than hot spiritual temperature, either hot or cold, would be how many of you, if you go into a cafe or a restaurant, why does the waiter continually fill up your water, your cold ice water? Because no one likes lukewarm water.

Why do they keep filling up your coffee cup? Because no one likes lukewarm coffee. You like it hot, you like your beverages hot or cold. I know there's some exceptions to that.

Or most of us, when you take a shower, you usually like a hot shower, not a lukewarm one. So those, I think, analogies provide a better fit for what John is doing. And again, John's instructions primarily depend on the geography of the area, Laodicea and Hierapolis and Colossae and their water supplies.

And I think both John intended that, and I think the readers would have immediately picked up on those associations in their own day. Besides the fact that I know of nowhere in the Bible where God ever calls, or Christ ever calls on his people to reject him, to either reject him or accept him. It's always to embrace Christ and to recognize, avoid the consequences of not doing so.

So I think the geographical background provides a more compelling reading of this text. A last and final distance is a literary distance. That is the Old New Testament texts are produced in a literary environment that is in many respects very different from our own.

That is the Old New Testament are composed of literary types that may or may not have similarities to literary types of our own day and literary media of our own day. For example, a couple of examples that may have some correspondence would be narrative and stories, also epistolary literature. We read stories and we read narratives, we write narratives and stories, we read and write letters.

So we have some familiarity with that kind of communication, but even then we can't necessarily assume that story writing and narrative writing and historical recording or writing letters or poetry was identical with the way we do it today. And in fact, there may be literary types that simply have no correspondence to ones in our modern day. So for example, when's the last time that you read or wrote an apocalypse? Or when's the last time that you read a prophecy? To compound the difficulty too is that we have a whole different medium of communication with the

onset of texting and different electronic means of communication that produces a whole different, in a sense, literary genre.

But in order to understand the Old New Testament, we need to be aware of the different literary types that the Old New Testament authors wrote in and produced the environment in which they produced the documents. And we can't assume again that our similar literary types are necessarily identical. So there's a literary gap, a literary distance that interpretation and hermeneutics helps us to overcome.

So hermeneutics, to summarize, hermeneutics then is a reflection on how we understand. What do we do when we read a text? What are we doing when we understand something? Hermeneutics helps us to reflect in that and be more intentional about how we do that. Interpretation, hermeneutics interpretation and interpretation also focuses on the methods that we utilize for interpreting a biblical text.

What are the methods and the techniques necessary for coming to grips with understanding and interpreting a biblical text? But these are necessary because we are dealing with a series of documents that in many respects are very distant from us, although there's a commonality that helps us to understand to some extent, there's also a distance, whether it's a temporal distance that the documents are produced in different time, a cultural difference that different cultural values lie behind references in the biblical text, whether it's historical events, whether it is a geographical distance or a linguistic difference or literary genre difference, different literary types. Hermeneutics and interpretation helps us to bridge the gap between these distances so that we can hopefully arrive at a more informed understanding of the biblical text. Now, what we'll do in the next lecture is we will look at and ask the question of what assumption about the Bible do we bring to interpreting the biblical text? Although we've seen hermeneutics ranges very broadly to cover any human

discipline where understanding is prominent, we're concerned with interpreting biblical texts.

So what assumptions guide the way we interpret and understand the biblical text? So the next lecture will focus primarily on the character of the Bible, especially on inspiration. What do we mean by that? What does that say about the biblical text? And how does that influence and impact the way we interpret the Old and New Testament?