

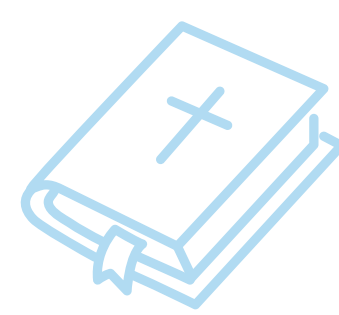
# BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS: AN ADVENTIST APPROACH

Editor Frank M. Hasel (Silver Spring, MD: BRI & Review and Herald Academic, 2020), 488pp.



## WHAT IS HERMENEUTICS?

Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation. It deals with the principles by which we interpret the meaning of the biblical text. The word “hermeneutics” is derived from the Greek word *hermēneuō*, a form used in the Bible when Jesus explained to the disciples the meaning of Scripture: “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted [*diehermēneusen*] to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning him” (Luke 24:27 ESV).



## WHY DO WE NEED BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS?

Some people say, “I don’t need any hermeneutics. I just read my Bible and that settles it for me.” It is certainly true that we should take the words of the Bible seriously and at face value. But this does not eliminate the need for interpretation. Otherwise, all would come to the same conclusions. The fact is that no one comes to the Bible with a blank mind. Everyone has a way of interpreting the Bible. But not all methods are equally profitable and not all methods are in harmony with Scripture itself. This becomes obvious when we look at different Christians and various churches that all claim to build their theology on Scripture yet come to vastly different conclusions.

The need for a proper interpretation of Scripture arises out of several factors, considering that we are separated from the biblical writers by:



TIME



LANGUAGE



CULTURE

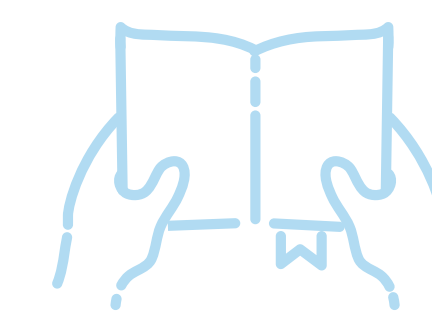
All this has an impact on our understanding of the Bible. The Old Testament of the Bible was written in Hebrew (and some parts in Aramaic); the New Testament was written in Greek. Any translation into another language is also an interpretation. That is why a knowledge of the biblical language will enhance our understanding of the Bible. Furthermore, we are finite human beings. We are not God, who is all-knowing. Our knowledge and understanding are limited. And we are sinful human beings whose understanding is darkened through sin. This often leads us to ignore the plain statements of Scripture.

All this explains why biblical hermeneutics is a necessity, and why we need a biblical hermeneutic that is in harmony with the presuppositions of Scripture.



## WHY IS HERMENEUTICS IMPORTANT?

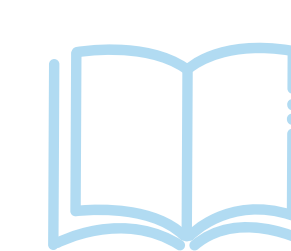
The issue of hermeneutics is the most foundational issue in theology! (It is not the most important question of theology, which is the one that pertains to our salvation.) But if we use the wrong methods of interpretation, we will come to erroneous conclusions. Depending on our methods and the principles of interpretation we use, our approach to Scripture will be very different and our interpretation of the Bible will come up with vastly varying conclusions. Biblical hermeneutics significantly impacts all other questions and teachings in theology. This is one of the reasons why the issue of hermeneutics is so hotly debated and why it is so important. With pluralistic methods that do not respect the self-testimony of Scripture and that conflict with each other, there will be no theological unity. In a sense, the issue of hermeneutics is like a watershed in theology.



## THE DANGER OF A WRONG HERMENEUTIC

Someone once said, “I can do all things through a verse taken out of context.”

If we use biblical texts out of context, if we ignore the original setting of a biblical passage, we inevitably twist its meaning, and our use of Scripture out of context quickly becomes the pretext for our own agenda! With a text taken out of context, we can legitimize almost anything. A careful hermeneutic will give room for the divine reality we find in the Bible and allow Scripture to determine its own meaning by respecting the biblical context of a passage and by carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture.



## BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS: AN ADVENTIST APPROACH

In this important book, twelve respected Adventist theologians and scholars have written fourteen interesting chapters that cover a wide range of different subjects of biblical interpretation from an Adventist perspective.

For every chapter of the book, there is a video with the author of the chapter, offering a short introduction to the subject and some instructive illustrations that are not found in the book. The videos are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Mandarin, and Arabic and can be found on the [BRI YouTube channel](#).

*“must read” type of scholarly work. Its usefulness is not restricted to a readership of highly educated specialists. The common man, desirous to know the real message of the Bible, may also be abundantly benefited by its accessible language and topical issues.” (TheoRhēma 16, no. 2 [2021]: 165)*