

Chapter 22

THE PARABOLIC PRINCIPLE

I. DEFINITION

That principle by which any parable is interpreted by discerning its moral and interpreting its elements.

II. AMPLIFICATION

A. **Definition:** A parable is “a short simple story from which a moral lesson may be drawn.” It is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The relevant terms in Scripture will now be considered.

Old Testament Hebrew MASHAL

= “properly a pithy maxim, usually of a metaphorical nature: hence a simile: a proverbial saying, parable, similitude, resemblance.”

Translated:

parable Numbers 23:7, 18; 24:3, 15, 20, 21, 23;
Job 27:1; 29:1; Psalms 49:4; 78:2;
Ezekiel 17:2; 20:49; 24:3; Micah 2:4;
Habakkuk 2:6

proverb Deuteronomy 28:37; I Samuel 24:13;
I Kings 4:32; II Chronicles 7:20;
Psalms 69:11; Proverbs 1:1, 6; 25:1;
Ecclesiastes 12:9; Isaiah 14:4;
Jeremiah 24:9; Ezekiel 18:2, 3

New Testament Greek PARABOLE

= “a similitude, a fictitious narrative (of common life conveying a moral); a placing of one thing by the side of another; a comparison of one thing with another; a narrative, fictitious but agreeable to the laws and usages of human life, by which either the duties of men or the things of God, particularly the nature and history of God’s kingdom, are figuratively portrayed; a short discourse that makes a comparison; it expresses a single complete thought.”

Translated:

Comparison Mark 4:30

figure Hebrews 9:9; 11:19

parable Matthew 13; 15:15; 21:33, 45; 22:1; 24:32;
Mark 4:13; 7:17; Luke 5:36; 6:39; 12:16,
41; 18:1, 9; 19:11; 20:9, 19; 21:29

proverb Luke 4:23

Theologically speaking, a parable is a fictitious, but true to human life, story that is designed to illustrate by way of comparison some spiritual truth.

B. **Purpose:** The use of parables was one of Christ’s main methods of teaching. He indicated that his reason for using them was two-fold:

1. To *reveal* truth to those who were open and hungry-hearted. (Matthew 13:9-12, 16, 19).

2. To *conceal* truth from those who were closed and hard-hearted. (Matthew 13:13-15).

C. **Sources:** Jesus took his parables from two major sources:

1. The realm of Creation — using such symbols as seed, wheat and tares, fish, heaven, pearls, sheep, etc.
2. The realm of Human Relationships — using such relationships as father and son, servant and master, bride and bridegroom, friends, etc.

D. **Classification:** There is much difference of opinion among Bible scholars over the definition and classification of the parables in Scripture. Though a few accept only those parables designated by Scripture as such, most scholars allow for a broader definition. Most all agree that a parable is an extended simile, but there is much disagreement over where the boundary line should be placed between simile and parable. Thus, in tabulating parables there is among scholars a wide range of numbers. Though various scholars have suggested several ways of classifying parables, for the sake of simplicity we will classify them as follows: (1) Short Parables and (2) Extended Parables.

1. **Short Parables:** A short parable could easily be confused with a simile. For the purposes of distinction, the simile will be viewed as generally having only one pair of details that can be compared, while a short parable will be seen as having several such pairs. For example, "He was led *as* a sheep to the slaughter" (Acts 8:32; Isaiah 53:7), is a simile. "His eyes were *as* a flame of fire" (Revelation 1:14), is a simile, "My beloved is *like* a roe" (Song of Solomon 2:9), is also a simile. On the other hand, "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" (Matthew 13:31, 32), is designated a short parable. "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have the piece which I had lost" (Luke 15:8, 9), is an undesignated short parable. And "There was a little city and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man" (Ecclesiastes 9:14, 15), is an undesignated short parable.

2. **Extended Parables:** An extended parable differs from a short parable primarily in its length and in the number of pairs of details which can be compared. A short parable will generally include from two to five such pairs while an extended parable will include more.

An extended parable must also be distinguished from an allegory. (Refer to the Allegorical Principle.) Some examples of extended parables are: the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-8), a designated extended parable; the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-31), an undesignated extended parable; the parable of the vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-6), an undesignated parable.

E. **Conclusion:** The *literary method of parabolic communication* used in writing Scripture gives rise to the *Parabolic Principle* of interpreting Scripture.

III. QUALIFICATION

A. The first step in using this principle is to make certain that the passage under consideration is a parable, whether designated or not.

B. A parable, being an extended simile, has one main focal point of comparison, but it is the whole of the parable that is the comparison. It is a comparison between the natural realm and the spiritual realm. Each of the details given concerning the natural realm have their correspondence to the spiritual realm. However, they all are vitally related to the focal point of the comparison. This can be illustrated with the kingdom of heaven parable in Matthew 13:33. The following questions could be asked concerning this comparison:

Is the kingdom of heaven *like* unto leaven?

OR Is the kingdom of heaven *like* unto leaven which a woman took?

OR Is the kingdom of heaven *like* unto leaven which a woman took and hid?

OR Is the kingdom of heaven *like* unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal?

OR Is the kingdom of heaven *like* unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened?

C. Every parable is designed to conceal and reveal one fundamental spiritual truth. In order to perceive the point of the parable the significance of each of its parts must be recognized. In other words the whole cannot be interpreted apart from an interpretation of each of its parts. As with all of Scripture the interpretation of parables must move from whole to part and from part to whole. All the details of a parable find their significance in relation to its main point.

D. In interpreting the parts of a parable the interpreter must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture by using the Context Group, Moral and Symbolic Principles. Many times the key to the interpretation of the parable will be found in its immediate context. Parables often involve various symbols which must be properly interpreted before the lesson of the parable can be rightly discerned.

E. Since parables are drawn from the cultural background of their authors, the interpreter should research the manners, customs, and material culture involved in the parable he is interpreting.

F. Doctrine should not be founded solely upon parabolic teaching. Though parables primarily illustrate doctrine, any doctrine they do teach must be viewed in its harmony with the clearly defined teachings of the Scripture.

G. Distinction must be made between parable and allegory. Refer to "The Allegorical Principle."

IV. DEMONSTRATION

A. **Christ's Demonstration:** Jesus Himself demonstrated this principle when He interpreted the extended parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43).

Parable — Matthew 13:24-30

Interpretation — Matthew 13:36-43

Kingdom of heaven like unto a man	Sower — Son of Man
Sowed seed	The good seed — children of the kingdom
In his field	The field is the world
The enemy	The devil
Sowed tares	Children of the wicked one

Wheat and tares grow together	
until the harvest	Harvest — end of the (age) world
The reapers.....	The angels
Tares bundled to burn.....	Wicked gathered and cast into fire
Wheat gathered to barn	Righteous shine in the kingdom

Jesus stated the lesson to be that at the end of the age the wicked and the righteous will be separated unto their eternal destinies.

B. Short Parables: Matthew 13:52. "Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

The key to the interpretation of this parable is found in Jesus' question to his disciples in verse 51, "Have ye understood . . .?" To interpret this undesigned parable we will interpret each of the parts that comprise it.

Parable	Interpretation
The man, householder.....	The scribe — disciple
The treasure-house.....	The heart (Matthew 12:35)
Things new.....	New teachings of truth
Things old	Old teachings of truth

The moral lesson of this parable is: as every disciple has received instruction in the things of the kingdom, he must also instruct others in the same way.

C. Extended Parables: Matthew 21:33-41. The parable of the vineyard (Mark 12:1-9; Luke 20:9-16).

To interpret this designated parable, first the parallel accounts in Mark and Luke must be compared, as has been done under the Comparative Mention Principle. Having gathered all the details we will now interpret them using the Symbolic Principle.

Parable	Interpretation by Comparative Scriptures
A certain householder	God the Father
Planted vineyard, hedged it	Israel; Nation — Isaiah 5:1; Psalms 80:9
Digged winepress, built tower	Winepress — Isaiah 5:1-7
Let out to husbandmen	Rulers, Kings, Priests, Elders of Israel
Far country	Heavenly country — Hebrews 11:11-16
Time of the fruit drew near	
Sent His servants	The prophets sent — Hebrews 1:1; Jeremiah 35:15
Husbandmen treated them evilly	Killed and rejected the prophets — II Chronicles 24:21; 36:16; Matthew 23:34, 37; Acts 7:52
More servants sent	More prophets sent. Major and Minor
Treated them likewise	Jeremiah 37:15; II Kings 17:13
Last of all He sent His Son	John 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-2; Mark 12:6
Husbandmen killed the Heir	Heir of all things — Psalms 2:8; Hebrews 1:2
They caught Him	In Gethsemane — Matthew 26:47-56
Cast Him out of vineyard	Outside the City — Hebrews 13:11-13; John 19:7
Slew Him	Slew, hanged on a tree — Acts 10:39-43
Lord of husbandmen miserably destroy those husbandmen	Jerusalem destroyed in AD 70 — Luke 19:41-44
Let out vineyard to other Husbandmen to get fruits	Kingdom taken from Jewry, given to a Nation (Church, I Peter 2:5-9) who renders fruits — Matthew 21:41-43

The lesson of this parable is: In their deeds of unfaithfulness and in crucifying the Son, the leaders of Israel were to be destroyed and their responsibilities given to the Church.

Chapter 23

THE ALLEGORICAL PRINCIPLE

I. DEFINITION

That principle by which any allegory is interpreted by discerning its lessons and interpreting its elements.

II. AMPLIFICATION

A. **Definition of Allegory:** Webster's Dictionary defines an allegory as: "A story in which people, things, and happenings have another meaning, as in a fable, or parable; allegories are used for teaching or explaining; the presentation of ideas by means of such stories; symbolical narration or description." In Scripture the word allegory appears only once, in Galatians 4:24. The Greek word in that passage will be briefly considered.

New Testament Greek ALLEGOREO

= "To allegorize; to speak allegorically or in a figure; to speak, not according to the primary sense of the word, but so that the facts stated are applied to illustrate principles; so to speak, that another sense is expressed than that which the words convey."

Translated:

are an allegory Galatians 4:24

Hermeneutically speaking an allegory is a figure of speech used to communicate truth by expressing one thing under the image of another. It is an implied comparison which is sustained through numerous corresponding details. It is a figurative treatment of one subject under the guise of another.

B. **Allegory and Parable:** An allegory is an extended metaphor, just as a parable is an extended simile. A *metaphor* is a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another. In it one thing is spoken of as if it were the other. It is an implied comparison in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used of one thing is applied to another (e.g., "The Lord is my rock" — Psalms 18:2; "Behold the lamb of God" — John 1:29). A *simile* is also a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another, but it is usually stated with words such as "like" or "as." It is a stated comparison in which explicit evidence is given that a comparison is being made (e.g., "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word." — I Peter 2:1; "His feet *like* unto fine brass" — Revelation 1:15).

From these definitions one important distinction between allegory and parable can be drawn. An *allegory* contains implicitly within itself, or its context, its own interpretation, in that one thing is stated as being another. ("I am the true vine" — John 15:1.) A *parable* will either state its comparison explicitly ("The kingdom of heaven is *like* to a grain of mustard seed" — Matthew 13:31), or not at all, and will require explanation outside of itself to know what is being compared ("A sower went forth to sow" — Matthew 13:3).

Most interpreters recognize the fact that it is difficult to make a perfect distinction between allegories and parables. Mickelsen (p. 213, 230) makes a worthwhile distinction between these two:

Parable

1. Plurality of main verbs in past tense

Allegory

1. Plurality of main verbs and mixture of tenses

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| 2. Formal comparisons (stated) | 2. Direct comparisons (implied) |
| 3. Words used literally | 3. Words used figuratively |
| 4. One chief point of comparison | 4. Plurality of points of comparison |
| 5. Particular example, a specific occurrence | 5. Emphasis usually on timeless truths |
| 6. Imagery kept distinct from the thing signified | 6. Imagery identified with specific thing signified |
| 7. Story true to the facts and experiences of life | 7. Story blends factual experience with nonfactual experience to enable the narrative to teach specific truths |
| 8. Explained by telling what the imagery stands for in the main point of the story | 8. Explained by showing why the imagery is identified with the reality and what specific truths are being taught |

C. Examples of Allegory in Scripture

1. Allegories in the Old Testament:

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|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| — Psalms 80:1-15 | The vine out of Egypt |
| — Proverbs 5:15-18 | The allegory of waters |
| — Ecclesiastes 12:3-7 | The allegory of old age |

2. Allegories in the New Testament:

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|----------------|---------------------------|
| — Matthew 5:13 | The salt of the earth |
| — John 10:1-16 | The good shepherd |
| — John 15:1-10 | The vine and the branches |

3. **Inspired Allegorization:** In a class of its own is Paul's "allegory of the two covenants" in Galatians 4:21-31. This passage is not an allegory as defined above, but rather is the only example in Scripture of inspired allegorization. In contrasting the Old and New Covenants Paul allegorizes certain Old Testament historical realities for the sake of illustration and emphasis. Because of this passage some have misconstrued Paul as a fanciful allegorist, while others have used him to justify their own allegorical abuse of Scripture. Both need to recognize that Paul himself indicated that this was an exceptional use of the Old Testament for illustration, that this is the only example of such in his writings, and that Paul fully supported the validity and literal meaning of the historical events.

D. **Conclusion:** The *literary method of allegorical communication* used in writing Scripture gives rise to the *Allegorical Principle* of interpreting Scripture.

III. QUALIFICATION

A. The first step in using this principle is to make certain that the passage under consideration is an allegory.

B. Being an extended metaphor, the chief points of comparison in the allegory must be identified.

C. To interpret the whole of the allegory each of its parts must be interpreted.

D. In interpreting the parts of an allegory the interpreter must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture by using the Context Group of principles, the Moral Principle and the Symbolic Principle. Many times the key to the interpretation of the allegory will be found in its immediate context. Allegories often involve various symbols which must be properly interpreted before the lessons of the allegory can be rightly discerned.

E. Since allegories are drawn from the cultural background of their authors, the interpreter should research the manners, customs, and material culture involved in the allegory which he is interpreting.

F. Doctrine should not be founded solely upon allegorical teaching. Though allegories primarily illustrate doctrine, any doctrine they do teach must be viewed in its harmony with the clear teaching of the Scriptures.

G. The interpreter must not confuse allegory with allegorization. Allegory is a legitimate way of teaching and illustrating truth by association. Allegorization forces a passage to communicate things not intended by the original author through use of a point by point comparison. In the allegorical method a text is interpreted apart from its grammatical historical meaning. What the original writer is saying is ignored and what the interpreter wants to say becomes the only important factor. Allegorization is the arbitrary assigning of meaning to the Scriptures.

IV. DEMONSTRATION

A. **Matthew 5:13:** "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

The key to the interpretation of this allegory was given by Jesus when He said, "Ye are . . ." To interpret this allegory, we will first interpret each of the parts that comprise it.

Allegory	Interpretation
Salt.....	Ye — disciples of Jesus
Of the earth.....	The world — mankind
Lost savour	Lost influence
Wherewith shall it be salted	Influence hard to be regained
Good for nothing	Of no profit to the Kingdom
To be cast out	Excommunicated
To be trodden under foot of men.....	Despised by unbelievers

The moral lesson of this allegory is: the world's only influence for good, the people of God, must maintain that influence lest they come under judgment.

B. **John 15:1-10:** The allegory of the vine and the branches. The key to the interpretation of this allegory is stated in verses 1 and 5: "I am the true vine, My Father is the husbandman . . ., Ye are the branches." To interpret this allegory we will first interpret each of the parts that comprise it.

Allegory	Verse	Interpretation
The vine and the husbandman	1	The relationship of Jesus to His Father. The Father totally cares for the Son
Fruitless branches taken away, fruit bearing branch purged	2	Sets forth the judgment of fruitless believers, and the purging of the fruitful believer in order to bring forth more fruit
The Word cleanses	3	The cleansing process of Christ's word to those in Him
Branch must abide in the vine to bear fruit	4,5	The believer must be in union with Christ in order to be fruitful
The branch not in the vine witheres and is burned	6	Those who are not in Christ suffer judgment

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| The branch connected to the vine receives its needs | 7 | The believer in Christ and with Christ's words in him has his requests granted |
| The husbandman glorified by fruit-bearing branches | 8 | The Father is glorified by disciples who are fruitful |
| The husbandman cares for the vine and the vine cares for the branches | 9 | The Father loves Christ, so Christ loves the believer. The believer is to abide in Christ's love |
| The branches abide in the vine as the vine abides in the husbandman's care | 10 | The believer, by keeping Christ's commandments, abides in His love, even as Christ abode in His Father's love by keeping His commandments |

The above interpretation of this allegory presents the main lessons to be learned. However, it should be noted that these do not exhaust the many facets of truth that are latent therein.

Chapter 24

THE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY

Due to the unique nature of prophecy and the special problems involved in its interpretation, an entire chapter will be devoted to the subject. As a literary style, prophecy is far more complex than historical or poetical literature. In that it is characterized by ecstatic utterance, it presents the interpreter with a concentrated revelation which may vary greatly in its form. The interpretation of prophecy presents to the interpreter one of the greatest challenges in applying the science of hermeneutics. However, prophecy being Scripture, it is evident that it can be interpreted by applying valid Scriptural principles of interpretation.

I. THE DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

Webster's Dictionary defines prophecy as: "Prediction of the future under the influence of divine guidance; act or practice of a prophet; something predicted."

There are several words in Scripture used to refer to prophecy:

Old Testament Hebrew

CHAZAH

= "to gaze at; mentally to perceive, contemplate (with pleasure); specifically to have a vision of; to see, behold with the eye; to see as a seer in the ecstatic state."

Translated:

behold	Job 23:9; Psalms 17:2; 27:4
look	Isaiah 33:20; Micah 4:11
prophesy	Isaiah 30:10
provide	Exodus 18:21
see	Isaiah 1:1; 13:1; Ezekiel 13:6-8; Habakkuk 1:1; Zechariah 10:2

MASSA

= "a burden; specifically tribute, or abstractly portorage; figuratively an utterance, chiefly a doom, especially singing; mental, desire."

Translated:

burden	Isaiah 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; Jeremiah 23:33, 34, 36; Habakkuk 1:1
carry away	II Chronicles 20:25
prophecy	Proverbs 30:1; 31:1
song	I Chronicles 15:22, 27
tribute	II Chronicles 17:11

NABA

= "to prophesy; i.e., speak (or sing) by inspiration (in prediction or simple discourse); prophesy under influence of divine spirit, in the ecstatic state."

Translated:

prophesy	I Samuel 10:11; Jeremiah 2:8; 26:11; Ezekiel 37:7; Joel 2:28; Amos 3:8
make self a prophet	Jeremiah 29:26, 27

NEBUWAH	= "a prediction (spoken or written)."
	Translated:
prophecy	II Chronicles 9:29; 15:8; Nehemiah 6:12
NATAPH	= "to ooze; i.e., distill gradually; by implication to fall in drops; figuratively to speak by inspiration; prophecy, discourse."
	Translated:
drop	Judges 5:4; Ezekiel 21:2; Amos 7:16
prophecy	Micah 2:6, 11

Thus, in these Hebrew words we see prophecy as an ecstatic vision, a burden, a divinely inspired utterance, a written or spoken prediction, and a dropping down of inspired speech.

New Testament Greek PROPHETEUS

=	"to foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration, exercise the prophetic office; to proclaim a divine revelation, prophesy, to foretell the future; to speak forth by divine inspiration; to break forth under sudden impulse in lofty discourse or in praise of the divine counsels."
	Translated:
prophecy	Matthew 15:7; Luke 1:67; 22:64; John 11:51; Acts 2:17, 18; 21:9; I Corinthians 14:1, 3-5; I Peter 1:10; Jude 14; Revelation 11:3

In Koine Greek the concept of prophecy was solidified to the point that only one word was used to encompass it. In the New Testament prophecy meant to proclaim a divine revelation, to foretell the future, and to break forth under sudden impulse into inspired discourse.

II. THE NATURE OF PROPHECY

The nature of prophecy is basically two-fold: forth-telling and fore-telling. There are as well, different degrees of prophetic inspiration.

A. Prophecy as Forth-telling: This form of prophecy is in the realm of preaching: the prophet speaks for God to the people, communicating the mind of God for the present. Often the past will be used to deal with the present. This will include such things as exhortation, reproof, warning, edification, and comfort.

B. Prophecy as Foretelling: This aspect of prophecy is in the form of prediction: the prophet speaks for God, communicating His mind for the future. Often both the past and present will be used to deal with the future. Many times the purpose of prophetic prediction is to produce present godliness.

C. Degree of Prophetic Inspiration: Scripture reveals that there are varying degrees of prophetic unction. These are:

1. **The Spirit of Prophecy** — This is defined in Revelation 19:10: "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy." The Spirit of prophecy is the Holy Spirit's ability to come upon men and cause them to speak forth inspired utterances. The Spirit of prophecy was evident in the Godly line from Adam to Moses.
 - a. Adam prophesied concerning his bride and the marriage estate (Genesis 2:20-25).

- b. Enoch prophesied of the second coming of Christ (Jude 14, 15).
- c. Noah was a preacher of righteousness because the Spirit of Christ was in him (II Peter 2:5).
- d. Abraham was spoken of as a prophet (Genesis 20:7).
- e. Isaac and Jacob had the Spirit of prophecy upon them as they blessed their sons (Genesis 27; 48; 49; Hebrews 11:20, 21).
- f. Joseph prophesied of the Exodus from Egypt (Genesis 50:24; Hebrews 11:22).

At times the Spirit of prophecy fell upon groups of people. In Numbers 11:24-30 the Lord took the Spirit that was upon Moses and placed it upon the seventy elders of Israel and they prophesied. In I Samuel 19:20-24 the Spirit of prophecy fell upon several groups of messengers, as well as upon King Saul.

- 2. **The Gift of Prophecy:** This is mentioned in I Corinthians 12:10 as one of the gifts of the Spirit. It can be defined as the God-given ability to speak forth supernaturally as the Spirit gives utterance. It is seen as being an operation of the Spirit in the New Testament Church which must be exercised within Divine guidelines (I Corinthians 14:3, 25, 31; I Thessalonians 5:20). Philip's four daughters are a possible example of this gift, in that the Scripture simply states that they prophesied (Acts 21:9).
- 3. **The Office of a Prophet:** In Hosea 12:10 and Hebrews 1:1 it is stated that God spoke to His people by the ministry of the prophets. A prophet was a person who was given the distinctive ministry of representing God before man. He did so by moving under the "prophetic mantle" that came upon him. The prophet was God's mouthpiece, or spokesman, through which the Word of God flowed, whether forth-telling or fore-telling. There were many men of God throughout Scripture who held this office. These will be dealt with in the following section.
- 4. **The Prophecy of Scripture:** In II Peter 1:19-21 the expression "prophecy of Scripture" is used to refer to the prophetic books of the Old Testament. Because the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, the prophecy therein must be regarded as inspired and infallible revelation (II Timothy 3:15, 16). This then is the highest degree of prophecy and requires the most careful and systematic interpretation.

III. THE MINISTRY OF THE PROPHETS

A. **Designations of the Prophets:** In all of the various periods of Israel's history in the Old Testament, there appears to be no greater or grander ministry than that of the prophets. The prophets were noble and holy men of God. They were the representatives of God to Israel, declaring His word, His mind and the will to the nation in times of prosperity or adversity. These prophets were known under the following designations:

- 1. **The Men of God** — I Samuel 9:6; I Kings 12:22: Morally and ethically, the prophets were indeed men of God, following, declaring and upholding the ways of God.
- 2. **The Seers** — I Samuel 9:9; II Chronicles 33:18; 35:18; II Samuel 24:11; Amos 7:12; Isaiah 29:10: The prophets were first called seers because of the visions, insight and foresight which they received from the Lord for the people.

3. **The Interpreters** — Isaiah 43:27: The word “teachers” means “interpreters.” The prophets were the interpreters of the Law of the Lord. They interpreted the history of the nation in the light of the Word of the Lord.
4. **The Messengers of the Lord** — Isaiah 42:19; Malachi 3:1: The prophets were the divine messengers, sent by God, bearing the messages of the Lord to the nation. They delivered the messages faithfully.
5. **The Servants** — Haggai 2:3: The prophets were also called the Servants of Jehovah. They were His slaves; love-slaves to the will and service of God.
6. **The Prophets** — Hosea 12:10: The most common designation is that of prophet. These men who were prophets were public expounders and preachers of the Word of the Lord. They spoke under inspiration of the Spirit. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved of the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 1:21). They prophesied through both preaching and prediction. They represented God’s Word to Israel. They upheld the righteousness of the Law, the holiness and mercy of God, Divine sovereignty over the nations, and reproved the sinfulness of men.

B. The Development of the Prophetic Office: It is important to see the rise and development of the prophetic office. Two focal points are seen in the prophets Moses and Samuel.

1. **The Prophet Moses — The Letter of the Law:** Moses stands unique among the Old Testament prophets because of that which he represents before God and the nation of Israel. Moses was the prophet who received the Law of God on Mt. Sinai. He actually became the *foundational ministry*, and all succeeding prophets were tested by the Law given to Moses.

The Lord communicated with Moses face to face and he became a type of the Messiah who would be “like unto him.” (Numbers 12:6-8; Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Acts 3:22-23; Isaiah 8:16-20; Luke 16:29.)

2. **The Prophets Samuel to Malachi — The Spirit of the Law:** It is under Samuel that we see a distinct development of the prophetic office. The Scriptures clearly mark Moses and Samuel as being key men in the prophetic ministry:

“For *Moses* truly said. . .” (Acts 3:22)

“Yea, and all the prophets from *Samuel* and those that follow after. . .” (Acts 3:24)

“And after that He gave them judges about the space of 450 years, until *Samuel* the prophet. . .” (Acts 13:20)

Samuel was the last of the Judges and the first of the line of the prophets. Thus, from Samuel to Malachi we have the ministry of the prophets. It seems evident from the Scriptures that Samuel, under direction of the Lord, gathered young men who were hungry after God into “schools of the prophets.” Here they received education and instruction out of the Law of Moses and were taught how to respond to the Spirit of the Lord in worship and prophecy (I Samuel 19:20). The Scriptures speak of these centers, where the sons of the prophets would gather together in preparation for ministry. It seems that schools of the prophets were found in:

Ramah

I Samuel 19:18-24

Bethel	II Kings 2:3
Jericho	II Kings 2:5, 7, 15
Gilgal	II Kings 4:38; 2:1

The dominant purpose in the establishment of these “schools of the prophets” was to maintain the spirit of the Law.

If Moses stood for the letter of the Law, the prophets indeed stood for the *spirit* of the Law. The true prophets of God never contradicted the letter of the Law; they upheld it. But when it degenerated into a dead form and mere ritual, the Holy Spirit came upon them to inspire and revive the spirit of the Law.

C. Prophets in Relation to the Kings: Not only do we see the beginning of the prophetic office in Samuel, we also see the beginning of the kingly office. It was the prophet Samuel who anointed both Saul and David to their kingly ministry. From this period until the captivities of the House of Israel and the House of Judah, there is a distinct relationship between the prophets and the kings. Most of the kings of Israel and Judah had a prophet of God sent to them. God’s purpose was to influence the government of the nation as a whole through the king by means of the prophetic word. The prophet represented the Word of the Lord to the kings, and the kings were judged according to their acceptance or rejection of the prophetic word.

In previous periods, men inquired of God through the Priest, but now inquiry of God was primarily through the prophet. Thus, most of the kings were privileged to have the ministry of the Word of the Lord through the prophets.

Saul and David had the ministry of Samuel — (I Samuel 9-10, 16)

David had Nathan and Gad also as prophets — (II Samuel 12; 24:11)

Solomon had the prophet Nathan — (I Kings 1:38)

Rehoboam had the prophet Sheminiyah — (I Kings 12:21, 22)

Ahab had Elijah and Elisha — (I Kings 17:1; 19:16)

The kings of the House of Israel and Judah had prophets sent to them. These are referred to as the major and minor prophets, and are spoken of in the opening verses of the books of the major and minor prophets. Examples are: Isaiah 1:1-2; Jeremiah 1:1-2; Hosea 1:1-2; Micah 1:1. An understanding of the character and times of the kings of Israel and Judah is necessary for an understanding of the nature of the Word of the Lord through the respective prophets of that period.

D. Classification of Prophets: For the purposes of this chapter we will classify the prophets under two groupings: non-writing prophets and writing prophets.

1. **Non-writing Prophets:** There are a number of prophets mentioned in Scripture who were not involved in the writing of Scripture. They ministered in the realms of guidance, forth-telling, foretelling, and words of wisdom and knowledge. God confirmed their ministries with signs and miracles. In the Old Testament there were men like Aaron, Nathan, Gad, Abijah, Elijah and Elisha. In the New Testament there were men such as John the Baptist, Agabus, and Silas.
2. **Writing Prophets:** Out of the prophets God chose certain men to be inspired writers of Scripture (II Peter 1:20, 21). These prophets wrote Scripture in different styles: historical, poetical and prophetic.
 - a. **Prophets who wrote Historical Books** — Some prophets were primarily involved in writing history. Moses in writing the Pentateuch, and Samuel in writing the books of Judges, Ruth, and I Samuel, are two such men.

- b. **Prophets who wrote Poetical Books** — Some prophets were inspired to write poetry. Two such men are David, who wrote many of the Psalms, and Jeremiah, who wrote Lamentations.
- c. **Prophets who wrote Prophetical Books** — Many prophets were inspired to record their visions and prophecies. Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah, especially were prophets of vision. These they received and recorded under inspiration as infallible prophecy, foretelling the future and destiny of the nations.

The prophetical books of the Old Testament have been referred to as the Major and Minor Prophets. This distinction refers only to the volume of their contents. The Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel. The Minor Prophets are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. All of these books include both forth-telling and fore-telling though with greater emphasis on the latter.

IV. THE CLASSIFICATION OF WRITTEN PROPHECY

In the writings of the prophets there can be found three major classifications of prophetic revelation. These are woven together throughout prophetic Scripture like a three-fold cord, and are often so closely entwined that they are difficult to separate. The three are: Local prophecy, National-destiny prophecy, and Messianic prophecy.

A. **Local Prophecy:** Local prophecy refers to instances when the prophet speaks to his own generation about their spiritual condition and God's desires for them. This is viewed primarily as preaching in which the timeless principles and truths of God's character and being are revealed and applied to the life-situation of the prophet's own generation.

Truth is eternal and remains the standard by which every generation is measured. Thus, truth is applicable to all generations and the truth applied to the prophet's day is also applicable today. However, before the interpreter can safely apply the prophet's message to present times he must be careful to accurately discern what the prophet was saying to his own generation. In order to do this the interpreter must thoroughly acquaint himself with the moral conditions of that day.

Some examples of local prophecy are Isaiah 40:18-31; 55:6, 7; Jeremiah 26; and Micah 6:8. These prophecies obviously include timeless principles applicable to all generations.

B. **National-Destiny Prophecy:** National-destiny prophecy is when the prophet speaks concerning the future history of nations. This is viewed primarily as prediction in which the prophet may use the nation's past history and its present condition as the stage upon which its future judgment and/or blessing is portrayed.

Though primarily concerned with the destiny of the chosen nation of Israel, the prophets also predicted the destiny of the Gentile nations.

Some examples of national-destiny prophecy concerning the nation of Israel are: Isaiah 11:11-16; 43:1-28; Jeremiah 30; Ezekiel 27 and Romans 9, 10, 11.

Some examples of national-destiny prophecy concerning the Gentile nations are: Isaiah 13-23; Jeremiah 46-51; Ezekiel 29-32; Daniel 2, 7; Amos 1, 2; Obadiah and Nahum.

In interpreting this area of prophecy, the interpreter must use the Ethnic-Division Principle so as not to confuse the destiny of nations.

C. **Messianic Prophecy:** Messianic prophecy is when the prophet speaks concerning Christ and the Church. This is viewed primarily as prediction in which the prophet may use various elements of past history, the present local situation, and even the future national destiny to foretell the ultimate phase of God's purpose in the Messianic era. Messianic prophecy encompasses all that relates to Christ and the Church, from His first coming through His second coming.

It was spoken of by Peter as "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" (I Peter 1:10-12). Messianic prophecy may be divided into three groupings, based on three stages of fulfillment:

1. **The First Coming of Christ:** These prophecies deal mainly with the birth, growth, ministry, sufferings, and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Most of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies pertain to the first coming of Christ and its related events. Some examples of these are: Genesis 3:15; Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Psalms 2, 8, 22, and 40; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; 40:1-8; 52:14; 53:1-12; 61:1-4; Jeremiah 31:31; Micah 5:1-2; Zechariah 11:12-13; 13:9.
2. **The Church:** These prophecies deal mainly with that which was to be the fruit of Messiah's sufferings, even the glory of the Church (Ephesians 3:21). There are many Old Testament prophecies which deal with the coming of the Gentiles into the kingdom of the Messiah. The New Testament clearly shows that these prophecies were predicting the grafting in of the Gentiles into the olive tree so that both Jew and Gentile could become one Body in Christ (Psalms 18:49 with Romans 15:9; Deuteronomy 32:43 with Romans 15:10; Psalms 117:1 with Romans 15:11; Isaiah 11:10 with Romans 15:12; Romans 11:13-25; Ephesians 3:6; I Corinthians 12:13).
Some examples of Messianic prophecies concerning the Church are: Isaiah 9:6-7; 26:1-4; 35:1-10; 54:1-17; Jeremiah 31:33, 34; Joel 2:28-32; Zechariah 2:10, 11; Malachi 1:11.
3. **The Second Coming of Christ:** These prophecies deal primarily with Christ's return to consummate that which He initiated in His first coming. Though there were only a few specific prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Christ's second coming, there are many which deal with its related events. Many of these prophecies deal with "the Day of the Lord" and its climactic judgments. It should be noted that the burden of New Testament prophecy is the second coming of Christ.
Some examples of second coming prophecies are: Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 2:10-22; 13:6-16; 24:1-23; 30:26-33; 34:1-17; Daniel 2 and Daniel 7; Joel 3; Zechariah 14; Malachi 4:1-4; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; I Corinthians 15; I Thesalonians 4:14-18; II Thessalonians 2; II Peter 3:1-13; Revelation 19.

V. GUIDELINES FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY

A. **Guidelines Based upon the Principles of Scriptural Interpretation:** Though prophecy is unique in its nature, the guidelines for its interpretation are to be primarily taken from the principles that are used to interpret the whole of Scripture. For this section the reader should refer back to the Principles discussed previously in this text, as these guidelines will be based upon them.

1. The Context Principle

- a. The first rule of hermeneutics, "Scripture interprets Scripture," must be applied to prophecy.
- b. Any verse of prophecy must be considered in the light of its Biblical, Testamental, and Book context.
- c. Caution must be used in interpreting a verse of prophecy in the light of its passage context. This is because the prophets, caught up in an ecstatic state, often did not weave together a context with a logical train of thought or a chronological treatment of events.
- d. In dealing with prophecy, the interpreter must work from whole to part and part to whole.
- e. The obscure passages should be interpreted in the light of the clear.

2. The First-Mention Principle: Recognizing the value of first-mention, the interpreter should be faithful to consult the first-mention of the prophetic theme with which he is dealing.**3. The Comparative Mention Principle**

- a. The interpreter should be diligent to search through Scripture for any possible fulfilment of the prophecy under consideration.
- b. In interpreting prophecy, all prophetic passages relating to the same subject must be brought together and compared.

4. The Progressive Mention Principle

- a. When dealing with a prophetic theme the interpreter must be aware of its progressive development throughout Scripture.
- b. The interpreter must not confuse the progressive development of the prophetic theme.

5. The Complete Mention Principle

- a. For the interpreter to understand all that the Scripture has to say on any given prophetic subject he must bring together all relevant prophetic passages.
- b. Each prophetic passage must be interpreted in the light of this whole.

6. The Election Principle

- a. The interpreter must constantly keep in mind the fact that God's elective purposes are the foundation of prophetic revelation.
- b. When interpreting national prophecy, the interpreter must keep in mind God's elective purpose for that specific nation.
- c. The distinction between temporal purposes and eternal purposes must be kept in sharp focus.

7. The Covenantal Principle

- a. All prophecy must be considered in the light of its Covenantal background.
- b. The interpreter must determine which covenant was the basis for the prophet's ministry.
- c. The interpreter must have a thorough knowledge of the covenants in order to be able to discern the covenants referred to in various prophetic passages.
- d. The developmental progression and inter-relatedness of the covenants must be recognized when dealing with prophecy.

- e. All prophecy must ultimately be interpreted in the light of the New Covenant. Old Testament prophecy must be interpreted through the cross and must not be used to overrule the everlasting New Covenant.

8. **The Ethnic-Division Principle**

- a. To properly interpret prophecy the interpreter must have a thorough knowledge of God's appointed ethnic-divisions and their respective places in His purposes.
- b. In order to distinguish between these divisions the interpreter should ask himself the following questions:
 - Does this verse refer to the united nation, the whole House of Israel?
 - Does it refer to the ten Tribed House of Israel, the Northern Kingdom?
 - Does it refer to the two Tribed House (plus the Levites) of Judah, the Southern Kingdom?
 - Does it refer to the Gentile nations?
 - Does it refer to the Church, chosen out of every nation?
- c. What is spoken of one division must not be interpreted as referring to another division. The same is true also of certain divisions within these divisions.

9. **The Chronometrical Principle**

- a. It must be recognized that the prophets were not always aware of the time element in their own prophecies (I Peter 1:10-12).
- b. The prophets were caught up into God's timeless perspective in which past, present and future were laid out before them. Thus, in transcending time, some prophetic passages involve a weaving together of the past, present and future. Often, in speaking to their own generations, the prophets would use the past as a stage upon which to foretell the future. To the reader the time elements seem to be confused. At times they utilized what is known as "the prophetic perfect tense" speaking of future events as though they had already occurred. Therefore the interpreter must move with extreme caution in assigning prophetic passages to specific time fulfillments.
- c. The interpreter should ask himself the following questions in order to distinguish the time element in prophetic fulfilment:
 - Was the prophecy fulfilled during the lifetime of the prophet who was speaking?
 - Was the prophecy fulfilled during the time of the captivity:
 - of the House of Israel to Assyria?
 - of the House of Judah to Babylon?
 - Was the prophecy fulfilled in the time of the restoration of Judah from Babylon at the close of the 70 years captivity?
 - Was the prophecy fulfilled during the time of Judah in the land after the Babylonian captivity; during the inter-Testamental period?
 - Was the prophecy fulfilled in New Testament times in relation to the Messiah, the Church or the Jewish nation?
 - Is the prophecy being fulfilled in the Church age?
 - Is the prophecy to be fulfilled in the final years prior to the second

coming of Christ?

- Is the prophecy to be fulfilled at the second advent of Christ?
- Is the prophecy to find fulfilment in the future ages:
 - The Kingdom of God relative to earth?
 - The eternal state in the new heavens and new earth?

10. The Breach Principle

- a. The interpreter must recognize that some prophetic passages deal with conditional promises. Because of this, the promise may be fulfilled in the prophet's generation if certain conditions are met. If the conditions are not met, the fulfilment of the promise may be postponed to another generation. With this in mind, the prophet ministers to the people, either exhorting them to fulfill the conditions, or pronouncing judgment upon them for having failed to do so. When these elements exist in a passage, the interpreter must be careful to interpret the passage in the light of them.
- b. The interpreter must also recognize that the prophets often viewed future events as mountain peaks close together, with no valleys in between. Thus, in a given passage, a prophet may group together events whose fulfilments may occur centuries apart.

11. The Christo-Centric Principle

- a. Since the prophets were men who dealt with human history from the divine perspective, and since Christ is the solution to the dilemma of human history, the message of the prophets concerns Him (I Peter 1:10-12).
- b. Though Christ is the center of the truth communicated by the prophets, the interpreter must discern whether each particular passage relates to Christ directly or indirectly.
- c. The interpreter must be careful not to force Christo-centric interpretation upon a prophetic passage. Passages that do not relate to Christ should not be interpreted as such.
- d. Prophecies containing Christo-centric elements must be interpreted in the light of clear New Testament historical and doctrinal revelation.

12. The Moral Principle

- a. The interpreter must recognize that the principles of God are timeless. Thus, principles which are applied to one generation are actually applicable to all.
- b. Many prophetic passages are simply inspired preaching (forth-telling) in which the prophet is applying timeless principles to his own generation. Before the interpreter can apply those principles to his generation, he must correctly discern how the prophet applied them to his own.
- c. In moralizing a passage, the interpreter must be careful not to confuse the literal meaning, nor to violate the other principles of interpretation.

13. The Symbolic Principle

- a. Symbols, used as well in types, allegories, and parables, are also a vital part of prophecy. Since the prophets many times are revealing the unknown in the terminology of the known, symbolism seems to be

- one of their favorite vehicles of expression.
- b. The interpreter must recognize that in apocalyptic prophecy, fanciful, non-real symbols are often used (e.g., Daniel 7; Revelation 13). Many times these symbols are non-real aggregates of real parts. In these special cases, great care must be taken to interpret the parts while interpreting the whole symbol.
 - c. In interpreting the symbols in prophecy the first rule of hermeneutics should be followed: let Scripture interpret Scripture. The basic qualifications of the Symbolic Principle must be followed.
14. **The Numerical Principle:** While the interpreter must recognize evident numerical significance in prophecy, he must be careful not to distort prophecy by forcing extreme numerical significances upon its interpretation.
 15. **The Typical Principle:** The interpreter must recognize the distinction between the types found mainly in the historical writings and the symbolico-typical actions primarily confined to the prophets. Some examples of symbolico-typical actions in prophecy are: Isaiah walking naked and barefoot for three years (Isaiah 20:2-4); Jeremiah hiding his girdle by the river Euphrates (Jeremiah 13:1-11); Jeremiah putting a yoke upon his neck (Jeremiah 27:1-14); Ezekiel's miniature portrayal of Jerusalem's siege (Ezekiel 4); and Ezekiel's lying on his side for over a year (Ezekiel 4). These actions must each be interpreted in the light of their specific contexts.
 16. **The Parabolic Principle:** There are relatively few parables to be found in prophecy (Ezekiel 17:1-21 is one example). Thus, care must be used to distinguish them from other similar figures of speech (refer to Ch. 23). In interpreting them, their symbols must be interpreted and caused to directly relate to the fundamental lesson the parable is teaching. The basic qualifications of the Parabolic Principle must be followed.
 17. **The Allegorical Principle:** As with parables, there are relatively few allegories to be found in prophecy (Isaiah 5:1-7 and Ezekiel 23:1-49 are examples). They also must be distinguished from other similar figures of speech (refer to Ch. 23). In interpreting them, the extended analogy must be drawn by interpreting the symbols involved so that the intended lessons may be discovered. The basic qualifications of the Allegorical Principle must be adhered to.

B. General Guidelines in Interpreting Prophecy: Because prophecy is unique in its nature, there are special guidelines to be followed in addition to those applied generally to the whole of Scripture. The following is a brief listing of some of these guidelines.

1. **The spiritual gap between the prophet and interpreter must be bridged:** In that the prophets were "in the Spirit" when they prophesied, the interpreter must be under the influence of that same Spirit when he seeks to interpret that prophetic word inspired by the Spirit.
2. **The natural gap between the prophet and interpreter must be bridged:** In that God utilized the prophet's own natural frame of reference, the interpreter must put himself into that frame of reference with appropriate studies in the fields of language, culture, geography, and history.

3. **The predictive and didactic types of prophecy must be distinguished:** Prophecy involves both forth-telling (inspired preaching for the present) and foretelling (predicting the future). These are sometimes woven together in a single passage and require skilful exegesis on the part of the interpreter to correctly divide them.
4. **The non-systematic character of the prophets must be kept in clear focus:** Prophecy may be non-systematic in basically two ways: (a) prophecies are not necessarily arranged in a progressive chain of thought, rather are often a compilation of fragmentary revelation; and (b) prophecies are not necessarily arranged as to their chronological order of fulfilment. In recognizing this problem the interpreter would do well to approach carefully the interpretation of prophecy, utilizing the context group of principles.
5. **The fulfilment of predictive prophecy must be determined:** In dealing with predictive prophecy the interpreter must ultimately come to grips with the problem of its fulfilment. He must answer the questions: "Who or what was the prophet actually speaking of?" and "When is the prophecy actually fulfilled?" The following are some suggestions in applying this guideline:
 - a. If the prophecy has been fulfilled, it should be studied in connection with materials that clearly indicate its fulfilment.
 - b. If the prophecy has been partially fulfilled, the interpreter should search for the reason. Could it be that the hearers were only partially obedient? Or could it be that the prophecy, though having only one sense, may have more than one fulfilment? Some prophecies of blessing or judgment seem to have several fulfilments through time, climaxing at the end of this present age.
 - c. If the prophecy is yet unfulfilled, the interpreter must proceed with caution in determining its eschatological significance. To begin with, he should look for interpretive clues based on the clear teaching of the rest of Scripture. Then he should determine the time element by using the questions given in the Chronological Principle (Ch. 14). He should also determine the local application of the prophecy, as well as the fundamental idea yet awaiting fulfilment.

VI. A DEMONSTRATION OF APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES TO PROPHECY

As already noted, hermeneutics is both a science and an art. The writings of the prophets present one of the greatest areas of challenge to the applied skill of the interpreter. The reason for this is found in the great variety of elements which compose the prophetic writings. This often calls for a weaving together of a number of principles in order to arrive at a proper interpretation of the prophetic passage under consideration. This indeed tests the skill of the interpreter. Not every prophetic passage will require the use of exactly the same principles. Which principles are to be woven together will depend on the elements involved in the prophecy. Hence the interpreter should be fully cognizant of the prophetic elements which need interpreting and the principles to be applied.

As a demonstration of the weaving of some of the principles together in interpreting prophetic passages, certain verses have been chosen from Hosea Chapters 1 through 4. It is not our purpose to thoroughly exegete these chapters, for to do so would involve a lengthy study into the background of the book, a bridging of the foundational gaps, and a verse by verse exposition of the passage. Instead, our procedure will be to choose

appropriate verses from these chapters to demonstrate most of the principles.

A. The Context Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 1:4 “. . . and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.”
2. **The Principle Applied**
 - a. **The Passage Context** — The passage context of this phrase is Hosea 1-3, in which God uses the prophet's domestic situation to illustrate His dealings with the House of Israel. The immediate context of the phrase is verses 2-5. Here the Lord commands Hosea to marry Gomer, an adulterous woman. When a son was born to them God commanded that his name be called Jezreel. Verses 4 and 5 are an explanation of the prophetic significance of Jezreel's name. This significance is to be found in the history of several generations preceding Hosea. Ahab and Jezebel, the wicked rulers of Israel, had slain Naboth to obtain his vineyard in Jezreel. For this God had pronounced vengeance upon them (I Kings 21). Within approximately 15 years this vengeance was executed upon the house of Ahab in Jezreel. Jehu, chosen by God to avenge Naboth's blood upon the house of Ahab, went beyond God's decree and slew a number of other persons at Jezreel (II Kings 9, 10). For this reason God pronounced vengeance upon the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel. Hosea uses this vengeance, which was executed upon the descendants of Jehu in his lifetime, to prophesy of a greater vengeance that was to come upon the house of Israel, the Northern Kingdom.
 - b. **The Book Context** — The book of Hosea sets forth Hosea's domestic life as an example of God's dealings with Israel: His union with the nation, her unfaithfulness to the marriage covenant, His chastisement of her, and His love and mercy in redeeming and restoring her to Himself. Thus, the phrase under consideration concerning judgment must be considered in the light of those in the rest of the book which speak of restoration.
 - c. **The Testament Context** — The Old Testament unfolds God's choice of Israel as a nation, His purpose in choosing her, and His dealings with her throughout her history through blessings and judgments. Though God was faithful to the marriage covenant He made with Israel, she repeatedly proved herself unfaithful. After centuries of patient dealings with her, God was forced to cast her off and send her into captivity: the house of Judah to Babylon and the house of Israel to Assyria. However, scattered throughout the Old Testament prophets are prophecies of restoration for the nation through her Messiah. The phrase in Hosea under consideration fits into this panorama as a prophecy of the Assyrian captivity of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
 - d. **The Bible Context** — The whole of Scripture context includes the clear New Testament revelation that Israel's judgment was caused by their sin of unbelief and that only through faith in Christ will they be restored to blessing (Romans 9-11).

B. The First Mention Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 1:1 “The Word of the Lord that came unto Hosea. . .”

2. **The Principle Applied:** Though the first reference to God speaking is to be found in Genesis 1:3, the first use of the specific phrase is to be found in Genesis 15:1. There God spoke to Abram in a vision and confirmed the seed-promise of His covenant with him. The phrase “the Word of the Lord came” signifies a supernatural communication of a divine revelation of God’s mind to man. The phrase carries this same significance through each of its numerous usages in Scripture, including the book of Hosea. Thus, when the Word of the Lord came to Hosea, God was communicating His mind to the prophet concerning the spiritual condition and national destiny of Israel.

C. The Comparative Mention Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 1:6, 9, 10; 2:23 “. . . for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel . . . for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God . . . and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God . . . and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, thou art my people; and they shall say thou art my God.
2. **The Principle Applied:** By comparing these phrases with quotations of them in the New Testament, their meaning may be ascertained. In Romans 9:25, 26 Paul quotes Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 in dealing with the relationship between Jew and Gentile in Christ. In I Peter 2:10 Peter takes elements from Hosea 1:6, 9 and 2:23 to show that those outside of Christ can now obtain mercy through Christ. These New Testament verses interpret for us the prophetic statements of Hosea to mean that both Israel, who were rejected as the people of God, and the Gentiles, who never were the people of God, may both become the people of God through faith in Christ.

D. The Progressive Mention Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 1:10 “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered. . .”
2. **The Principle Applied:** By noting the progressive mentions of “sand” in Scripture, the meaning of this verse may be substantiated.

Genesis 22:17	Abraham’s seed to be as the sand on the seashore.
Genesis 32:12	Jacob’s seed to be as the sand of the sea.
Joshua 11:4	The Midianites were as the sand in multitude.
I Kings 4:20	Judah and Israel as the sand in multitude.
Isaiah 10:22	Israel as the sand of the sea.
Jeremiah 33:22	Seed of David to be numberless as the sand.
Romans 9:27	Israel as the sand of the sea.
Hebrews 11:12	Abraham’s seed as the sand.
Revelation 20:8	Hosts of Gog and Magog as the sand.

The above progressive mentions show that the sand of the sea is significant of the innumerable masses of Abraham’s seed after the flesh and of earthly unregenerate mankind. Thus, though Hosea prophesies concerning the cessation of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, he confirms that the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant remains valid.

E. The Complete Mention Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 2:15 “And I will give her . . . the valley of Achor for a door of hope. . .”
2. **The Principle Applied:** By considering every reference to Achor in Scripture, the interpretation of Hosea’s prophecy becomes quite clear.
 - Joshua 7:24, 26 The valley of Achor was chosen as the stoning place for Achan and his family because he had “troubled” Israel by taking forbidden spoil from the city of Jericho. Achor means “trouble.”
 - Joshua 15:7 The valley of Achor was on the border of Judah’s inheritance.
 - Isaiah 65:10 The valley of Achor was to be a place for herds to lie down for the faithful seed of Judah.

These references show that for Israel the valley of Achor had originally been a place of national trouble, then became a part of the national inheritance, and was to become a place of blessing. The prophecy of Hosea encompasses the whole of this progressive revelation by promising that what was once the valley of troubling would become a door of hope. That which had hindered their entrance into their inheritance would become a doorway into it.

F. The Election Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 1:1, 2 “The Word of the Lord that came unto Hosea . . . the beginning of the Word of the Lord by Hosea. . .”
2. **The Principle Applied:** The phrases above not only indicate the giving of a divine communication but also a calling to declare that communication. As noted in the Election Principle, there are basically two types of callings. The election of time refers to God’s choosing of individuals or nations to fulfill His purposes in relation to time. God chose Hosea as the most suitable vessel to depict His relationship to Israel and call them to repentance.

G. The Covenantal Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 1:10 “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”
2. **The Principle Applied:** This verse contains covenantal terminology. The language relates to four different covenants: the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, and New Covenants. The “sand of the sea” involves the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 22:17). The phrase “Ye are not my people” implies the Mosaic and Palestinian Covenants (Deuteronomy 27:9; Jeremiah 31:32 because the nation failed to keep the conditions of these covenants). The phrase “sons of the living God” points to the New Covenant (Romans 9:26). In the light of the covenantal revelation, this verse of prophecy shows the relationship between four covenants. Hosea confirms the seed-promise of the Abrahamic Covenant and affirms that, though Israel would be rejected as God’s people and cast out of the land on the basis of the Mosaic and Palestinian Covenants, they would finally become the sons of the living God under the New Covenant.

H. The Ethnic Division Principle

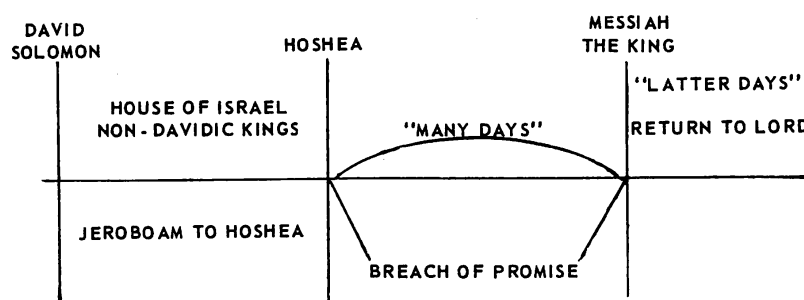
1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 1:6, 7 “for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; . . . but I will have mercy upon the house of Judah.”
2. **The Principle Applied:** These verses refer to the two houses within the ethnic division of Israel. After Solomon’s reign the nation of Israel was divided into two separate nations. The Northern Kingdom was called the house of Israel and consisted of ten of the tribes. The Southern Kingdom was called the house of Judah and consisted of two of the tribes and the Levites. These two houses had their respective God-ordained destinies. Thus, Hosea could prophesy seemingly opposing destinies for them. At the time of Hosea’s standpoint in history, judgment was about to fall upon Israel while God’s mercy was yet to be extended to Judah.

I. The Chronometrical Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 3:5 “Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.”
2. **The Principle Applied:** The time period mentioned in this verse is “the latter days.” By using the context group of principles, this term can be shown to refer to the Messianic era (Isaiah 2:2; Ezekiel 38:16; Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:1-2). Once this term is interpreted, we then discover the time in which rejected Israel would return to their God and serve their Davidic king.

The Breach Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 3:4, 5 “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king . . . Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king. . .”
2. **The Principle Applied:** God had promised Israel that they would have kings to rule over them (Genesis 17:6, 16; 49:10). The fulfilment of this promise began with David. After the division of the nation, both houses had their respective dynasties: the house of Judah having Davidic kings and the house of Israel having non-Davidic kings. In due time both houses experienced God’s breach of promise concerning kingly rule and went into respective captivities. Hosea prophesies concerning the house of Israel’s experience of this breach, abiding many days without a king. Then he immediately foretells their seeking after their Davidic king in the Messianic era.



K. The Christo-Centric Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 2:16 “And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.”
2. **The Principle Applied:** The nation of Israel had been the wife of Jehovah by the marriage covenant made at Mt. Sinai. The Lord declared that He had been a husband unto the people (Jeremiah 31:32). Over the years of Israel’s history, the nation had played the harlot and had taken the names of Baal worship on her lips and was given a bill of divorcement (Jeremiah 3:8; Isaiah 50:1). Thus Israel became divorced from the Lord God. Hosea here prophesies that there would come a day in which the names of Baalim would be taken out of Israel’s mouth and that the nation would call the Lord “Ishi,” which means “My Husband.” This signifies a restoration of the marriage state. The apostle Paul writes to those who know the law and tells them that they have become dead to the law by the body of Christ and that the old husband is dead; they can now be married to a new husband, Jesus Christ (Romans 7:1-4; II Corinthians 11:1-2). Hence, the husband is Jesus Christ and it is this which reveals the Christo-centric element in this verse of Hosea.

L. The Moral Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 4:6 “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”
2. **The Principle Applied:** Originally the nation of Israel had been chosen to be a kingdom of priests unto God; to know the law of the Lord and to teach that knowledge to others (Exodus 19:3-6). However, over the years of Israel’s history, the nation failed to learn the law of God; they forgot it and finally rejected the true source of knowledge. Because of this, God said through Hosea that He would do to them what they had done to His law; that is, reject them and forget them. Israel could no longer serve in priestly functions. The moral is applicable to all generations, for, any individual or nation who rejects God’s law and the knowledge of God therein, will also be rejected of God.

M. The Symbolic Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 1:4, 6, 9 “Call his name Jezreel . . . Call her name Lo-ruhamah . . . Call his name Lo-ammi.”
2. **The Principle Applied:** Hosea was commanded of the Lord to take his wife Gomer unto himself. As a result of this union, in time there were born to the prophet three children. These were called by specific names which God gave to Hosea, each having symbolic significance. Jezreel means “it will be sown of God, seed of God, God will scatter,” or “dropping of the friendship of God.” This was symbolic of the scattering of the house of Israel. Lo-ruhamah means “not having obtained mercy,” and this was symbolic of the casting off of Israel into Assyrian captivity. Lo-ammi means “not My people,” and this pointed to the rejection of the nation for its sins. Thus, Hosea’s three children — two sons and one daughter — had symbolic names and were “signs and wonders” (Isaiah 8:18) declaring a message to the house of Israel.

N. The Numerical Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Hosea 3:2 "So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver. . ."
2. **The Principle Applied:** The Lord God, after describing Hosea's wife as adulterous, commanded the prophet to go and buy her back to himself for 15 pieces of silver. Silver itself is symbolic of redemption money (Exodus 30:11-16) while the price of redemption was 15 pieces, which is a significant number in Scripture. By comparing the Scripture references which speak of the number 15 it seems that this number is connected with "*rest through redemption*" (Leviticus 23:5-7, 34-35; Esther 9:20-22). (Also note that the number 15 is a multiple of 3×5 . The number 3 is the number of God, and 5 is the number of grace or atonement. Together the numbers become significant of the grace of God revealed in the atonement.) Hosea bought his adulterous wife with this price of redemption, thus bringing her back again into union and rest with himself.

O. The Typical Principle

1. **The Scripture:** Read Hosea 1:2-9; 2:1-5, 14-23; 3:1-3.
2. **The Principle Applied:** It is evident that the life-story of Hosea is symbolic and typical of the spiritual relationship of Jehovah to the nation of Israel. It is symbolic of Jehovah's past and present relationship with the nation and it is typical of His future relationship with her through the cross of Jesus Christ and the work of redemption.

Hosea was a prophet of tender, deep and pure love. He married Gomer, entering into the marriage covenant with her. She had been a "wife of whoredoms." Yet, Hosea took her to be his wife, according to the word of the Lord. He felt the union would be one of life-long happiness. To Hosea were born two sons and one daughter; Jezreel and Lo-ammi were the names of the two sons and Lo-ruhamah was the daughter's name. Their names were symbolic. In the course of time, Gomer was found to be playing the harlot and with great sadness and according to God's law, Hosea was forced to divorce his adulterous wife. Yet God still gave promises of a new betrothal and covenant that would come. After a period of time, God commanded Hosea to buy his wife back to himself for 15 pieces of silver and 1 ½ homers of barley. Hosea did so, taking her to himself again with an exhortation to her that she was not to be for another man.

The whole story becomes symbolic and typical of Jehovah's relationship with the nation of Israel: Hosea represents Jehovah God; Gomer, his wife of whoredoms, represents Israel in her former idolatry in Egypt (Ezekiel 20:5-9). As Hosea took Gomer to himself according to the word of the Lord, so Jehovah took Israel to Himself under the Law Covenant. At Mt. Sinai He entered into a marriage contract with the nation and became a husband to her (Jeremiah 31:32). Children were born to the nation. However, just as Gomer played the harlot, so did Israel (Ezekiel 16; 23). Jehovah gave her a bill of divorcement (Jeremiah 3:8; Isaiah 50:1). It was after this that God gave promises of the coming New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Hosea's buying back his wife with silver was typical of Jehovah's redeeming Israel by the price that Christ paid under the New Covenant (Hebrews 13:20). It was to be under this covenant that natural Israel, divorced and

cast off under the Old Covenant, could be restored to a proper relationship with God through Christ.

Symbol/Type	Symbolized/Antitype
Hosea, the prophet.....	The Lord God
Gomer, wife of whoredoms.....	Idolatrous Israel in Egypt
Hosea takes Gomer to be his wife.....	Jehovah takes Israel to be His wife at Mt. Sinai
Children born to them	Multiplicity of seed
Gomer plays the harlot.....	Israel plays the harlot
Hosea puts her away for many days	Jehovah divorces Israel for many years
Promises of new betrothal and covenant given	Promises of new covenant given
Hosea buys his wife back for price of silver	Jehovah redeems Israel by the blood of Jesus
Gomer again becomes his, never to belong to another man	Israel becomes Jehovah's again, restored through the New Covenant, never to belong to another

CONCLUSION

It is a fitting conclusion to this text to remember that all men will give an account on the day of judgment for their every word (Matthew 12:36). The apostle James exhorts us not to be many teachers knowing that the heavier burden of accountability will be upon such (James 3:1-2). This surely becomes a challenge to all who seek to interpret the divine revelation, the Holy Scripture. It is sadly possible to have the correct hermeneutical principles yet fail in interpretation because of the lack of proper union with Him who is THE Hermeneutician. To have all the hermeneutical principles without The Hermeneutician is to be like a ship without a helmsman. It is the prayer of the authors that teacher and student together will grow up into Jesus Christ in all things as we each seek to know Him who is life eternal. May this text be a helpful instrument towards that end. Amen.

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