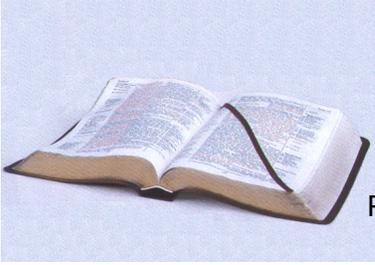
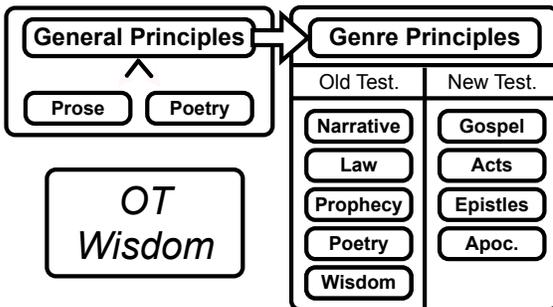


Biblical Hermeneutics



Genre
Principles: OT
Wisdom

Literary Interpretation



Hermeneutics—Genre: OT Wisdom



General Observation

“Readers must remember that the roots of wisdom thought lie in creation theology. A person acquires wisdom not by receiving divine revelation but by recording observations about what works or fails to work in daily life in the world created by God.”

—KBH

Hermeneutics—Genre: OT Wisdom



OT Wisdom: Key Concepts

- Introduction
- Common problems
- Wisdom forms
- Interpretive principles



Hermeneutics— OT Wisdom: Concepts



Biblical Metanarratives

- Creator
- Creation
- Garden
- Fall



Creation

Israel

Jesus

Background Narrative for Wisdom

Story

Story

Story

Story

Story

Story

Old Testament

New Testament

Bible

Hermeneutics—OT Law: Metanarrative

OT Wisdom: Key Concepts

- Introduction
- Common problems
- Wisdom forms
- Interpretive principles



Hermeneutics—OT Wisdom: Concepts



Concepts: (2) Problems

- Undefined terms
 - Universe of terms with special definitions
 - Example: “fool” is not imbecile, but godless
- Unconnected sayings
 - Isolating individual sayings as autonomous
 - Fosters idiosyncratic interpretations

Hermeneutics—OT Wisdom: Problems



Concepts: (2) Problems

- Ignoring or ignorance of contexts
 - Literary: highly poetic, requiring basic understanding of parallelisms, acrostics, alliterations, numerics, comparisons, parables, allegories, riddles
 - Historical, cultural: embedded in a culture and time, requiring basic understanding of normative social interactions and cultural expectations

Hermeneutics—OT Wisdom: Problems



OT Wisdom: Key Concepts

- Introduction
- Common problems
- **Wisdom forms**
- Interpretive principles



Concepts: (3) Forms (Books)

- Proverbs (Book of Proverbs)
 - Concise, memorable truths from applied human experience
 - Form gives name to the book
 - Forms vary: descriptive, prescriptive, comparisons, antithetical contrasts, etc.
 - Not intended unconditionally, universally
 - Strength: memorable, applicable, practical
 - Weakness: imprecise, incomplete

Concepts: (3) Forms (Books)

- Instruction (Book of Proverbs)
 - Imperative exhortation with reasons given
 - Application should focus on motive clauses
- Autobiography (Ecclesiastes)
 - Personal story driving to a point
 - Two story types: (1) example, (2) reflection
 - Reflection type dominates Ecclesiastes
 - Application should focus on main point

Concepts: (3) Forms (Books)

- Disputation Speeches (Book of Job)
 - Argument to persuade by opposing points
 - Forms: complaint, hymnic material, avowal of innocence
 - Distill main point of each speech and set in contrasting pairs
 - Understand narrator's assumptions about Job, Job's friends, and God

Concepts: (3) Forms (Books)

Job—Narrator's Assumptions:

1. Job: innocent, but not right
 - a. innocent: 1:1; 31:1–40; 42:10–17
 - b. not right: 42:1–6
2. Job's friends: wrong, period (42:7–9)
3. God: righteous, but unfathomable (38:1–41:34)

Hermeneutics—OT Wisdom: Forms



Concepts: (3) Forms (Books)

• Disputation Speeches (Book of Job)

- Understand inferred answers (Stevens)

- ♦ The “why not fair?” question has no answer. Life simply is unfair. Expecting otherwise is unwise.
- ♦ The “why me?” question has no answer. Personal suffering is an eternal enigma.
- ♦ The “why hope?” question always has an answer, because God always is present.

Hermeneutics—OT Wisdom: Forms



OT Wisdom: Key Concepts

- Introduction
- Common problems
- Wisdom forms
- Interpretive principles



Hermeneutics—OT Wisdom: Concepts



Concepts: (4) Principles

- Read provisionally
 - Recognize conclusions not eternal truths
 - Know statements not categorical promises
 - Direct revelation can abrogate results
 - Perspectives often in polarities for balance
- Read collectively and canonically
 - Balance entire corpus of wisdom literature
 - Weigh results against biblical revelation
 - Apply necessary theological correctives

Hermeneutics—OT Wisdom: Principles



Concepts: (4) Principles

- Read with literary sophistication
 - Understand literary devices, forms, poetics
 - Establish historical, cultural backgrounds
- Recognize special considerations
 - Ecclesiastes raises questions of intent
 - Song of Songs raises questions of literal

Concepts: (4) Principles

- Ecclesiastes (question of intent)
 - What is *Qohelet's* point-of-view?
 - ✦ Intended as cynical “foil” to be avoided?
 - ✦ Intended as “how to live” in light of all die?
 - What is *Qohelet's* term *hebel*?
 - ✦ All is ephemeral, only for a time, then gone?
 - ✦ All is useless (“vapor”: vain, futile, etc.)?
 - What is *Qohelet's* teaching?
 - ✦ God inscrutable, life incalculable, death inevitable?
 - ✦ If so, what is application?

Concepts: (4) Principles

- Song of Songs (question of literal)

Genre is love poetry, life setting is wedding banquets.

Concepts: (4) Principles

- Song of Songs (question of literal)
 - What literary approach to the material?
 - ✦ Literal: explicit exultation of human love?
 - ✦ Allegory: God's love for Israel, Christ's for church?
 - If literal, what is the purpose?
 - ✦ teach the ethics of monogamy?
 - ✦ teach an emphasis on faithfulness?
 - ✦ encourage godly choices in relationships?
 - ✦ read as counter-cultural to modern society?